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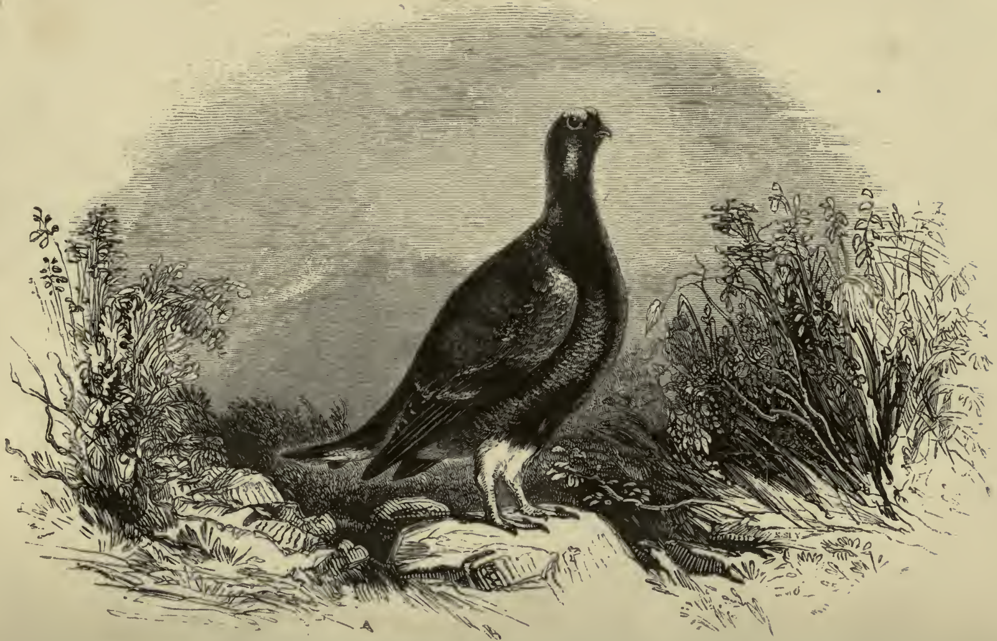

HYBRID BETWEEN GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME

THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH

CONTAINING

MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS IN ALL HIGHLAND SPORTS

WITH

WANDERINGS OVER CRAG AND CORREI,
"FLOOD AND FELL"

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN, Esq.

THIRD EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLI

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1851

TO

SIR JAMES COLQUHOUN OF LUSS, BART.

LORD LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTY OF DUMBARTON

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

THE MANY RAMBLES WE HAVE TAKEN TOGETHER

IN BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

WITH OUR FISHING-RODS AND GUNS

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

HIS BROTHER

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"Ilk flow'r that blooms on foreign fell
Wad mind me o' the heather bell;
Ilk little streamlet's jeuk and turn
Wad mind me o' Glenourock burn.
Lands may be fair ayont the sea,
But Hieland hills and lochs for me!"

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

In order to make my book on Highland Recreations complete, I have united it with " Rocks and Rivers." The materials have also increased on my hands, it being my constant habit to mark down every novelty—not, however, entering it as manuscript until strictly subjected to further observation.

Without the slightest pretension to be called a Naturalist, I have always endeavoured to keep my eyes open when the wilder points of Nature were unfolded before me; and I can truly say, that no part of my mountain-life has given me such unmixed delight as watching for myself the minute and tender care of the Great Parent of all good, in adapting these creatures of the storm to their solitudes, and spreading before them " a table in the wilderness."

Buffon, when asked the secret of his success, replied, "I have sat at my desk for fifty years!" Much, therefore, of his choicest information must have been derived from hunters, all of whom *ought* to be amateur naturalists. When we see the blunders bequeathed from scribe to scribe, even in many books of good authority, it gives great encouragement to those whose amusements afford them the means of noticing remote and peculiar creatures, to communicate to the scientific their own fresh and natural remarks. In regard to the habits of fish especially, no man is better qualified to give accurate information than a finished angler; for much of his superiority must consist in having a more thorough knowledge than his neighbour of all their wiles and ways.

Perhaps a more favourable *observatory* of this kind could scarcely be found than my present fascinating home on the banks of Loch Awe. The crow of the moorcock is heard from our windows, the bell of the roebuck, in the adjacent hanging wood, sounds close to our door; a good eye and glass may command the correis of Ben Cruachan; infinite varieties of wildfowl crowd our Loch in winter, many of them rare Polar visitors ; the salmon streams of the Awe and Urchay are within easy distance, and the mighty Ferox roams our shores for miles.

Having some sympathy with the classic chronicler of Selborne, who, lamenting the scarcity of quadrupeds in our island, remarks that "every new *species* is a great acquisition," I have determined to keep my hands clear of the extermination of any. The marten, the wild-cat, the kite, and the eagle, are not banished from the shaggy woods and rough braes of Sonachan and Barbea—they are scarcely grudged a share of the spoil ; and though this whimsical forbearance may subject me to the charge of having sunk the sportsman in the "amateur naturalist," it is an accusation to which I can very cheerfully plead "Guilty."

April 1851.

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THE
MOOR AND THE LOCH

CORRACH-BAH; OR, A PLEA FOR THE WASTES

How shrunk are Scotland's rugged untamed desolations! We see those mushroom larch-plantations skirting the steeps of our brown mountains, with their luxuriant verdure. The subsoil-plough, tile-draining, and all the ingenious etceteras of modern invention, have reclaimed many a bleak and barren moor, which once only served for pasture to the hardy black cattle the unhoused hirsel of the hills. Thriving fields of yellow grain, and glancing sickles, and merry voices swelling the autumn gale, now enliven those wastes, once the chosen haunts of the bittern and the whaup. Many of the lords of the heather themselves have caught the improvement mania, and either modernise their "own grey tower," or pull it down; building a splendid mansion in its honoured stead. The wild feudo-Highland grounds and scenery must, of course, be made to fit this upstart of a house; and many a knoll, covered with its tangled brushwood, and blazing with the yellow gold of the whin and the broom, must be levelled and swept away, to convert the whole into an English lawn.*

In addition to this we have the new law of entail, which will go a good way to destroy our famed nationality; and by introducing moneyed strangers who know nothing, and feel less, of sympathy with the Highland character, will (unwittingly, perhaps,) do all they can to extirpate it altogether. It is melancholy to hear some "*nouveaux riches*," at Radical meetings, spouting forth their untutored volubility upon this (to me) painful subject—"If the hereditary feudal lairds and lords cannot improve their estates, they ought to sell them to those who can!"—to those pioneers of civilisation, whose chief idea of a Highland estate is that of a *good bargain*, and whose notion of raising the Highland character consists in assimilating it to their own! They may give employment,† and money for money's worth, but all their efforts will be unavailing to transform the Gael into their *beau idéal* of a peasant; and never can they gain that place in his heart, only to be occupied by his feudal chief of ages past. Our Queen better knew her northern people, when, upon her first memorable visit to this *land of Catarans*, she, like the great chieftainess, cast herself freely, fully, upon the unbought devotion of her clans.

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* "Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that wretched love of novelty, which originates in selfishness, narrowness, and conceit, and *which especially characterises all vulgar minds,* there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affection for the signs of age, that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time."—*Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford.*

† A great outcry has been raised against the "Highland clearances," and much obloquy cast upon the proprietors of these remote islands and

Perhaps I feel too strongly on this subject; and I know I am open to the remark that feudalism implies dependence, while no feeling of that sort is compatible with improvement in character or country. But are we sure that *all* we term improvement is more than simply alteration? And is there one mountain-born son of Albyn who will not agree with me in preferring our unspoiled, unplanted glens, our wild game, and our national distinctness, to all the busy important bustle of modern civilisation, which has already transformed many of our most romantic nooks into models of "suburban villas"? I well recollect offering to show an exquisite specimen of real Highland taste and beauty, with all its wild character preserved, to a worthy metropolitan: his answer was, "Ah, thumthing in the Englith thtyle!!" He had ascended Ben Lomond shortly before, the day lovely, only a few light clouds flitting over

localities for turning adrift their dependents. Many of these poor creatures, although suffering every privation, refuse to emigrate, even when given all reasonable encouragement. It is a hard case, but what *can* the lairds do? To give employment, by reclaiming such land, is out of the question, and to support such numbers of starving people would ruin the estate. The only resource, now that the kelp-trade has failed, is to reduce the population, at the same time enlarging the *grazing* farms, (the surest return in the Highland districts,) and giving leases to respectable *Highland* tenants.

the brown heath or scattered rocks, between long intervals of brilliant sunshine: the lights and shadows upon the opposite mountains seemed formed to call up feelings and recollections long gone by. Our citizen, however, returned vastly delighted at having rather called up so good an appetite for dinner. After having satisfied his craving, he abruptly broke out, "Would it be pothible to fill up Loch Lomond?" His own genius anticipated the reply—"Ah! by tumbling Ben Lomond into it, I thuppothe! Now, how many acres of good land would you gain?" "Well," thought I, "this is improvement with a vengeance;" and I should, with great pleasure, have pitched in his little fat body, by way of a sleeping partner to the doomed mountain! However, upon thinking over his strange proposal, it struck me that it was a plain, matter-of-fact, pounds-shillings-and-pence view of the subject; and if I was fairly attacked upon that point, I should not stand half a chance in the argument. No doubt the country will be richer the more it is cultivated; but few Highlanders, with any touch of imagination, would barter, even for this, its former lonely and desolate grandeur, with its accompaniments of wild birds and animals; or would, without a pang, change the bold heart and ready hand of the natives into those of passive and obedient serfs. If driven to make a choice, I must shelter myself under the shrewd logic of a fellow-countryman, who, having affirmed that the grapes of Scotland were better than those of England, and being asked to prove it, coolly answered, "I maun premeese, I like them soor!" Like him, I must also premise, that I would not give the frowning crag or barren fell for all the rich slopes and verdant valleys of the Lowlands.

There are two kinds of wild scenery pre-eminently deserving the epithet "sublime;" but to feel their overpowering effect, they must be seen with every associated object. You cannot view the sea-cliff in perfection unless there is nothing before you but the boundless, fathomless ocean. An arm of the sea, or a firth, will not do; their waves are never those rolling, booming surges, which impress one with the vastness from which they come. There must also be the countless variety of sea-birds,* some thickly studding every jagged projection, and others riding the swelling billow, their bright plumage glancing in the beams of the morning sun. My greater favourite, however, is the wild and lonely mountain, with its crags, its bare heath, its solitary moor-loch, and, above all, the eyrie of the golden eagle, dread monarch of the mist. Spring is the season to enjoy both in perfection, as all the winged tenants have then taken possession of their temporary abodes. Every variety may be seen and studied; while from their tameness a nearer view may be obtained than at any other time. Few springs have passed without my enjoying either a marine or mountain treat, sometimes both, and the pleasure has then been heightened by contrast. A slight sketch of one of these later excursions may be admissible here.

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* The white-tailed eagle, or erne, not unfrequently hatches on the overhanging rocks of the sea, and by her gallant swoops and screams, when her territory is invaded, adds much to the impression of wildness and grandeur. As congenial a haunt for its nidification is the island of a moor-loch, if there are any old trees to fix the eyrie upon, finding its hunting-ground in the neighbouring morasses; whence it has acquired the name of the bog-eagle.

In the recesses of the Black-Mount Forest, very considerably above the level of the sea, there is a muirland lochan, about a mile long by half a mile broad, called in Gaelic, Lochan Nahachalach; and a little to the east, connected by a rocky brook, is Loch Bah, (the Drowning Loch,) about three miles long by a mile broad. The shores of these lochs, if shores they may be called, which consist of an occasional strip of yellow sand, are seldom trodden by any foot but that of the wild deer or the otter. Jagged points of rock continually obtrude themselves above the blue-grey water, and the eyrie of the sea-eagle fixed upon the top of an old birch, on a rugged heathery islet of Loch Bah, while another eyrie graces an aged Scotch fir of Loch Nahachalach, complete a picture so exquisitely savage, that fancy in its wildest mood could scarcely alter or amend. On the south these lochs are bounded by an extensive morass, full of small tarns, intersected by a pretty large muir-burn; and on the east of Loch Nahachalach a steep craggy hill rises abruptly from its side. An eyrie of the golden eagle is placed on a shelf of rock half-way up, and I have enjoyed the rare luxury of seeing both eyries at the same moment, and both queens in undisturbed possession of their thrones. Seldom any collision took place, each having her favourite hunting-ground. There was the mountain for the nobler bird, and the morass for her more vulture-shaped neighbour. They sometimes, however, had a battle in the air; but the looser form, the heavier movement, and the less daring spirit of the erne, made her no match for the mountaineer, who soon drove her screaming to her island.

In the distance may be discerned the dark forms of mountains belonging to that range called Corrach-Bah, a very favourite resort of the golden eagle. The correis which intersect them afford the richest pasture for the deer; and the hill-fox, the wild-cat, and the marten are not yet banished from those desolate precipices. It is not to be inferred, however, that the deer-forest is also a preserve for vermin. There is many a splendid hunt after the marten or the fox, which taxes the mettle both of men and dogs. And although there often are only the hounds and their quarry upon the bare mountains, and the echoes of the rocks to cheer them on, yet, to a lover of the pure picturesque, it is worth a hundred Lowland fox-hunts, with their red coats, horns, huntsmen, whippers, and all! Nor are the eagles allowed to increase beyond a certain limit, as each pair consumes no inconsiderable number of red-deer calves as well as other game. But Lord Breadalbane has too much of the Highland heart to grudge this, or to wish, like some other proprietors, to extirpate our truly national bird.

It was towards the end of April 1845 that, armed with my duck-gun to storm one of these eagle-fortresses, I sailed in the Loch Goil steamboat, on my way to these favourite haunts. I had also put up two trolling-rods in compliment to the salmo-feroxes of Loch Awe. We left the Broomielaw at seven o'clock on a fresh sunny morning, and paddled merrily down the Clyde. The fat rosy steward, with his quaint face of good-nature, was in high feather, and frequent in his assurances that we might expect "a pleesant sail." Under his auspices we were soon seated at a good breakfast of whitings taken out of the firth the night before. By the time we had discussed them, we were coasting the shingly beach of Loch Long; and having touched at Ardentinny, and viewed the fairyland of Glenfinart, its emerald lawn, and rampart of brown hill and tangled wood, we struck into the bleak Loch Goil. A short time brought us alongside of its primitive quay, where we deposited ourselves and luggage in the mongrel kind of coach, half-boat half-omnibus, which was to convey us across the isthmus separating Loch Goil from Loch Fine. Creeping up one side of the hill at a tortoise pace, we rattled down the other at a gallop, by way of a change. A very small steamboat plies between St Catrine's and Inverary, and I was in the act of superintending the embarkation of my chattels, when a bustling official assured me that he would see them all safe. I put faith in him, and immediately began a discussion with two fellow-travellers about the whale that had been harpooned shortly before in the loch—or the hill of Dunnequaigh—or the Duke's Castle—or I don't recollect what. Upon landing at Inverary my trolling-rods were missing, and no "satisfaction" to be had, as my officious friend was safe on the opposite shore, and my poor rods lying within tide-water mark! The landlord of the Argyll Arms, however, obligingly offered to send the ferry-boat and forward them next morning by the post* to Cladich, where I hoped to bivouac for a few days after my eagle campaign.

Having dined with my two agreeable companions, we hired an open carriage, and drove to Cladich, where we parted, they going on to Oban by Port Sonachan, and I to the Black Mount. After a long, rugged, but enjoyable drive, partly along the banks of Loch Awe, where the cuckoo was heard in every dell, or seen poising himself upon some still leafless patriarchal thorn, and partly through the environs of the forest, I arrived at the solitary little inn of Inveruran. The Forester's house was within a short distance; so I arranged with him that we should start by daylight next morning for the eagle's eyrie, partook of Highland cheer in a snug little Cyclops of a parlour, ornamented with the horns of the red-deer, and then retired to my dormitory.

Day was just breaking when I crossed the river Tulla, on my way to Peter Robertson's cottage. He was standing-ing before his door, consoling himself for his early start by a pipe of very strong tobacco. The morning was all we could wish,—calm, grey, and mild. As we passed the banks of the loch, roe-deer were quietly cropping the greensward which sloped to the water's edge, and now and then a fine buck would raise his head and look listlessly over his shoulder, as if wondering what business we had to be so soon astir. The black-cock, surrounded by his hens, was crooning his antics on the tops of the knolls, and was answered by the red-cock with many a cheery but eccentric call, from the more distant heights. A male hen-harrier was flitting stealthily above the heather, seeking his breakfast where it would be easily found, with small chance of human company at his morning meal. Now and then an Alpine hare would canter lazily away, or raise herself upon her hind legs to listen, moving about her inquisitive ears.

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* Generally a stout hale carle, of middle age, who walks from ten to fifteen miles and back again in a day, with the mail-bag slung at his back. The first time one of these primitive posts was dignified with a little gig equipage, he came in late, and made excuse that "he was taigled wi' a gig!" Of course he was turned off. Poor Sandy Bell had walked twenty-seven miles a day for thirty years of his life, and at his dismissal was fresh as May. He bitterly complained that he lost, first his bread, "by thae new-fangled nonsense," and then his health, for want of exercise. He is only an instance among many who have been ruined by *cutting a dash.*

For some miles we walked along the road which intersects the lower end of the forest, when Peter suddenly turned into its gloomy depths. Small flocks of deer now crossed us frequently, and sometimes a large herd would saunter past at a slow walk. Occasionally we saw their profiles on the crests of the mountains, or at feed, dotted along some distant correi, in appearance no bigger than roes.

Peter had been entertaining me with many a hunting anecdote, or with the natural history of some of the wild denizens of the forest, when the first streak of the rising sun struck the gaunt head of a bald cliff in the centre of the mountains of Corrach-Bah. "Now, sir," suiting the action to the word, "in that craig is your eagle." A threatening crag it was; from the view I got, it seemed as steep as the side of a house from top to bottom. For the first time I felt a slight misgiving, lest the shot might be crank and difficult, when the bird flew out of such a rugged mass. What if I should miss! However, I banished these craven thoughts, and marched on merrily as before.

We were still a long mile from our rocks, when a dark bird rose in the midst of them, and winged his way to the opposite mountain. Was he a buzzard? No; small as he appears, that determined flight, and free flap of the wing, can belong to no bird but the eagle. Peter looked carelessly at him. "Yon's the cock: he'll be for the opposite hill, after bringing the hen her breakfast." He now whipped out his glass, and placing his back upon a hillock, and the glass upon his knee, looked long and anxiously through it. At last, jumping up, shutting the glass with a satisfied jerk, and looking to me with a smile, "She's on, sir." I now took his place, but it was some time, in spite of Peter's minute directions, before I could discern the eyrie. "Look, sir, to the side o' yon bushes in the face o' the craig." 'Twas easy enough to see *them;* they seemed "moored" not "in the *rifted*" but *solid* "rock." When I at length detected the eyrie, it appeared no bigger than a rook's nest, and how Robertson had discovered "she was on" I was a good deal puzzled to find out. But he told me to keep my eye upon the east side of the nest, and I should see a black ball which would seem higher at some times than others, and was caused by the eagle's raising her head. My qualms returned; I saw that the eyrie was about thirty yards down in the cliff, that my footing would not be firm, and that, if the bird were so inclined, she might dash into the abyss with the speed of the wind. Peter, however, was talkative as ever, evidently in high glee that there was every chance of a shot.

We now struck off to the left, as if walking away from the eyrie. Having taken a long circuit, we edged in, till we got a slope of the mountain between us and our quarry. This achieved, we walked rapidly round till we came to its base, at the opposite side to that where the noble bird was sitting in perfect security and peace. Peter now climbed slowly up, continuing his stories to most inattentive ears. I had some faint recollection, afterwards, of a curious bird with extraordinary feet, which frequented the forest, whose history he was relating with great animation just when he gained the ridge of the mountain. There, however, all his tales were at an end. He at once relapsed into the cool and wary hunter. Creeping forward with promptitude and decision, he knew, to an inch, where to look for the eyrie among all that fantastic chaos of rocks. Beckoning me to advance, he showed the outer sticks of the nest, and pointed to a rock close to us, where lay a grouse nearly devoured, and a ptarmigan beautifully picked, but with the skin unbroken. Our attack upon the eagle began by plundering her storehouse; for Peter, rolling up the ptarmigan in his handkerchief, pocketed it as a *bonne bouche* for dinner. We now held a consultation as to the easiest way of approach. Scrambling down a hollow, we were within fifty yards of the eyrie, when a ravine intercepted our progress. I pointed to a little bank of ochre-coloured moss beyond. "That's the place," whispered Peter. Back we ducked again, over the same ground, and, crawling along the ridge, evaded the ravine. The critical moment of failure or success was now arrived. With my left knee on the bank of moss, and my right foot planted against a rock, to prevent a slip on the steep,—my eye fixed on the outer rim of the eyrie, and Peter, mute as a stone but sharp as an arrow, awaiting the signal,—I stopped a moment to take breath. A slight nod over my shoulder, and Peter gently struck the palms of his hands together, pat—pat. It was just enough for the eagle to hear, but it seemed very loud to me. Pat—pat—pat, louder and louder. I was now getting very nervous. "Throw a stone at her!" Peter had too much generalship for that. He selected a small pebble, and threw it on the steep, directly above the eyrie. I watched every hop of the stone, lower and lower, till I saw that it must drop straight upon our victim. I knew it was now or never. Instantly, I caught sight of the bold flap of a giant wing, and the mighty bird soared majestically from the dizzy chasm. The shot was not difficult. I may say, that my aim was cool and determined. She reeled round and round, and fell headlong into the yawning abyss, quite dead. I now took a long breath, and but for Peter's delighted face, could scarcely persuade myself she had fallen. If he had either hallooed loud, or thrown straight at the eagle, she would most likely have dashed out, wheeling and tumbling—an uncertain and difficult shot. Fain would I have secured the eggs, but this was impossible without ropes, which we had neglected to bring. Peter, however, offered to send them to Cladich the next day.

I was now impatient to secure my prize. We had to descend the sloping ridge, and come round in front, at the base of the chasm. It was, certainly, a lordly fortress—fit abode for this marauding Thane of the Wastes. Flanked by bastions and buttresses of massy rock, which guarded the stronghold on either side, and keeping watch upon its rugged eminence, the eagle's sleepless eye could detect the most minute or distant object in the valley beneath.

We searched the rough ground at the foot of the precipice for some time, without discovering the dead eagle. Indeed, we both fancied that she had dropped much further off than was actually the case. At last I discovered the red-brown feathers, like a large tuft of her own heather, close to the foot of the cliff. A finer specimen could not be seen; the markings were perfect, and the plumage in the finest order.

The sun had now risen high and clear, the surrounding mountains looked low, warm, and blue. I was now gay as Peter, and, while we tramped over moor and moss, I made him repeat his forest tales. I found that the "extraordinary feet" he had so minutely described, belonged to the night-jar, which bird, however, is rarer in the forest than in more cultivated localities. Some of his anecdotes of eagles are really worth notice, as illustrating the strength and ferocity of the bird. A couple, cock and hen, were trapped at the same bait by Robertson. As they were not seriously injured, he wished to bring them home alive. This would have been an impossibility to most people, as there is but one way of carrying them with any degree of safety: it is by placing the enormous creature under your arm, and holding his legs, immediately above the huge claws, firmly in your hand. As long as you walk steadily, and do not shake him roughly, the eagle will remain still, and make no effort to escape. But if you stumble, or turn sharply round, it is ten to one that he fixes his talons to the bone in your thigh. Robertson was carrying the two birds in this manner, and, having come a long way, his arms became cramped, and he was trying to relieve them by leaning upon a stone dyke, when one of the savage creatures struck its claw into his leg. The pain was great, but he knew that if he attempted to extricate himself he would lose both birds. So, Spartan-like, he patiently waited till some assistance should turn up. On looking down the road he saw a packman slowly padding along; but, in trying to accelerate his professional pace by a loud shout, he shook the hen-bird, and she immediately repeated the attack on his other thigh. He was now fairly pinioned, and the pain scarcely bearable. At last the pedlar came up, but his horror was so great at poor Peter's predicament, that he only stared in blank dismay. "Toot, man, tak' ma knife oot o' ma pocket, and cut open this beast's claw." This was done with some difficulty. "Noo gang roond on the ither side, an' ye'll fin' anither job." The man, who had no idea that Peter was grappled on both sides, quickly obeyed, muttering, "Saw I ever sic sorrows o' birds in a' ma life!" Both eagles were brought safe home, but Peter assured me that he was unable to walk for many a day.

Another story of a prisoned eagle vindicating his dignity has so much of the comic about it that we forgive the savage revenge. A raw-boned Highlandman came to Robertson's house:—"Is your faither at hame?"—"No," said one of his children. "Has na he a tame aigle?" The little girl pointed out the place where it was confined. There was a hole cut at the bottom of the door, where its food was thrown in; Donald peered cautiously into the hole; quick as light, the eagle seized his nose, and it was only by a severe struggle, and the cartilage giving way, that he effected his escape. When Peter came home, he found him sitting in a doleful plight, but, having comforted him with a dram, and patched up his nose with sticking plaster, he sent him away with his curiosity quite cured about eagles.

I mention one more, to show the power of the bird when a mere nestling. Peter and two shepherds had gone to take an eaglet from the nest. The eyrie was a little way from the top of the cliff; Peter descended to it by a rope, one of the shepherds was a little above him, and the other, who had a very weak head, stipulated for a secure berth at the top. Peter passed the eaglet to the first man, who, in like manner, gave it safely to him at the top. But, he having most likely given it a nervous twitch, it seized him fiercely. Down he fell on his back, dread of toppling over into the abyss drowning all sense of pain. Up came the other shepherd, but, when he saw the man moaning and helpless, he was seized with such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that he could give no assistance. When Peter reached the top, he drew man and eaglet upon firm ground, and then extricated the claw. As soon as he found himself upon level ground and free, he rushed at his jocose neighbour, and Peter had some difficulty to prevent a battle. It was a mortal affront to mention an eagle in this man's presence ever after.

But we have now got back to Peter's cottage. Loch Tulla lies glistering under a burning sun : I see the landlord at Inveruran slily peeping round the corner, anxious to discover whether we had returned empty-handed. My appetite also warns me that it is past nine; so, having appeased it by a subsoil of "halesome parritch," and a top-dressing of fresh eggs, "Now, landlord, out with the 'shan-dra-dam.' "*

My jolting drive to Cladich in my "chariot" was not over till towards two o'clock, but the keen air of the mountains had completely effaced the recollection of my solid breakfast. I therefore ordered a mutton-chop, and went to the shore to examine my craft. I had already bespoken the services of old Sandy M'Kenzie, "wha kens whar the big fish lie as weel as ony man on Loch Ow side." Sandy being appointed skipper, begged to be allowed to choose his own crew, which consisted of a stout, good-natured "callant" of about sixteen, yclept "Johnny," —occasionally "Jock," when Sandy was in a patronising mood. Sandy was once a strong bony man, and piqued himself upon being one of the best wrestlers in the country. Now his eye is dim and filmy, much the colour of a boiled onion, and his athletic arm is paralytic and weak as a child's. I might have had far abler men at the oar, and as knowing about the haunts of the fish; but whenever I troll Loch Awe, none but that poor, ragged, woe-begone old man shall command my boat so long as he is able to do it.

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* The name given by a rural minister of the Kirk, who sported one of these vehicles, to a little spring-cart with a seat across for the "dames." "The minister's man" could never be persuaded to attempt this learned word, and would persist, in spite of him, to call it his "*chariot*," as the nearest approach he could master.

Having satisfied myself that the "cobbles" were not *more* leaky than they generally are, I returned to the inn. Monzie's keeper had been there to see my eagle, so I asked his leave to shoot a couple of ring-dotterels which were tippeting on a green bank close to the boats. This he at once civilly agreed to. All was now ready for the evening fishing. Johnny carried my trolling-rods; Sandy a "cogue-fu'" of live bait, and a little basket of provisions; and I my duck-gun, loaded with No. 6 for the dotterels. Poor little fellows! They looked so pretty that it was a shame to fire at them. But as I had no specimen in my collection, I could not resist the temptation of stringing both at a shot. One lay, but the other, being only wing-broken, ran into the water with so light and graceful a step, it seemed as if walking on glass. The rods were soon baited, the evening was perfect for fishing, and the feroxes took well. We came over no large ones, however, and the three brought into the boat were only four, three, and two and a half pounds. We had intended to troll to the bay of old Castle Connal, eight miles down the loch, built, as Sandy says, by the Danes, but were obliged to defer it till next day. The bay which this castle commands is a famous resort of the largest size of the ferox. When we fish it, Sandy always tells a story of one of the Lochiels, who had been taken captive by a hostile clan, and confined there. His jailor had an annuity during his lifetime. The Camerons, however, found out where he was concealed, and came down in a body. As soon as the wretch saw them, he stabbed him with his penknife, having no other weapon at hand, expecting a reward for his atrocity, which, no doubt, he received.

Night overtook us before we could gain the harbour of Cladich, *alias* the Burn Foot, which is the only safe anchorage in case of a storm. And, indeed, it is very difficult to bring up a boat anywhere else, the coast being so shallow. The entrance to this burn is so intricate, that a man rowing in and out every day may be completely puzzled after dark. "Johnny," by some hieroglyphic shadowy marks of the trees upon the water, known only to himself, at last piloted us safely through, and was "Jock, my man," till we got to the inn.

The old dun eight-day clock had just "chapped" seven, when my gallant crew cleared out of harbour, and, with my rods, bait, provisions, and pea-jacket, were making for Port Sonachan Quay, where I had directed them to meet me. The morning was colder, the wind had changed from west to east—"a bad airt" for the fish. There were certain appearances also in the sky which foreboded squally weather. The best of the fishing-ground is below Port Sonachan, so I did not wish to waste time on such an unpropitious day, until we got there. I sauntered dreamily along, admiring the views as they unfolded themselves, and had sat for some time on Port Sonachan shore, listening to a chorus of cuckoos, before the measured stroke of Sandy and Johnny appeared at some distance, slowly propelling their clumsy boat. I question if I gained much time by my manœuvre, though Sandy appeared quite satisfied with the rate of their progress. I was soon seated in the stern, with lovely baits towing behind. "No a rug," as Sandy repeatedly said; but he endeavoured, poor fellow, to keep up our spirits by telling a tale of every wood, hill, or rock, we crept slowly past. "There's the badger's rock, sir; he has never left it for the last fifty year." The grey hermit of the rock called me back to my boyish days. The "brock-holes" in the oak wood—the traps my brothers and I had purloined from the old keeper, who preferred killing vermin by the lazy method of the gun—my delight when I detected the first poor captured badger—all rose fresh before me, as in those sunny mornings of life's early spring. My brothers and I had been brought up in the country, and were hunters from our childhood. Our couple of terriers were game as flint, and yet they were never able to draw a badger from his natural fastness. I have heard them hold one to bay for hours, in the inmost recesses of his earth. On one occasion, when a favourite terrier had teazed the poor animal for a long time, it slily followed, and when the dog was within a yard of the hole's entrance, bit his hind leg to the bone. This harassing the rear of a retreating enemy showed tactics, on the part of the old grey friar, that we could scarcely have expected. I once brought home a half-grown cub which had wandered from the hole, rolling it up in my jacket. (What will not boys do?) It soon became so tame as to eat beetles and humble-bees from our hands, and would lap up porridge and milk like a dog. I well recollect—for it was a job that cost us no small trouble—digging out an old she one. To the last she kept the dogs at bay; and even when we heard the growl within a couple of yards, they were unable to dislodge her. Whenever we struck into the wide cell, they dashed in upon her, and inflicted such injury that she soon died. There were two cubs, about a week old, which made a low chirping squeak. The cell where they were was round, hard, and dry, about two feet in height, by four or five yards in circumference. There was no food in it. Many a badger we trapped, and, I verily believe, were as proud of the brock-holes as an Indian chief of his finest hunting-ground. Those that we trapped soon learned to take part of the dogs' supper.

We never saw them eat grass or hay, and should as soon have thought of giving such food to a dog as of insulting them with it. What they call "badger's hay-making" is neither more nor less than the routing up the moss, which they are obliged to do to get at beetles, grubs, &c., among its roots. This dries, and the badger brings home a little for its winter bed. We used to notice as much of this hay made as would suffice for a good-sized stack, and more than would fill up every badger's hole in the country. I need scarcely say that what they carried was never missed.

My reveries were now broken by Sandy pointing out the nest of the "salmon-tailed gled," and there are the owners wheeling their graceful circles. Two roes were also looking at us from the shore, and another a little further on. They seemed not the least afraid, as we pulled slowly past. I was admiring the beautiful hanging wood, in which the kite's nest held a prominent place near the top of one of the finest old oaks, when a pull, that bent my rod's top to the water, and spun round my large wooden pirn, brought me to my legs at a spring. To seize the rod and place the butt above my knee, with a good bend at the top, was the work of an instant. Sandy was also active: he gave both oars to Johnny, and began, with his shaky hands, to wind up the other rod out of the way, in case of a collision. I told him always to do so when I hooked a trout. At this moment the gorgeous fish sprang a yard out of the water, coming down with a splash that made the rocks echo. Sandy, at no time very expert, became quite nervous at sight of the monster, and bungled his work sadly. I gave him a push out of my way, and in so doing knocked off his tattered hat into the water at the bottom of the cobble. He only smiled, without a vestige of anger. I saw his thin grey hair, and am happy to recollect that at that exciting moment, ashamed of my impatience, I picked up his hat with my left hand, and placed it on his head, poor Sandy all the time begging me "never to heed it." Sandy's whole heart was in the capture of the fish. His rod was by this time wound up, he was again at the oar, and I had fair play. The ferox bored like a harpooned whale; sometimes he would change his course, and go down to the bottom, taking forty yards of line, which he made swirl through the water with a humming noise, like a low sound of the telegraph wires. When I shook him up, he would fight away for the middle of the loch. At length he grew weaker, and I got him under command of a short line. It was a beautiful sight—that noble fish, sometimes showing his glancing scales for a moment, and then trying to bore under the boat, and always foiled by the boatmen, who promptly obeyed my slightest signal. He now began really to fail, and I felt I could lead him; so, directing Sandy to a shingly part of the shore, where there were no rocks, I determined to land him there. The beach was very shallow; and, in spite of my remonstrances, Sandy walked up to his knees in water, and drew the cobble ashore. I was now on *terra firma*, but my fish was by no means done up yet. Every time that I brought him to the shallow, he dashed away with as much vigour as before. This could not last; and the bursts became shorter and slower, till my victim was unable to get down at all, and only struggled on the top of the water. I had ample opportunity to admire his dimensions, colour, and shape, and was determined that no rashness or eagerness to obtain it should rob me of so rich a prize. At last he turned upon his broad and gleaming side. Now was my time. And like a wrecked and gallant vessel he lay stranded on the beach!

A proud man was Sandy M'Kenzie then. He took entire possession of the fish, and would hardly let Johnny look at it; if he ventured to touch it, he met a stern rebuke. Well did Sandy know how rare it was to come across a trout of that size in Loch Awe now-a-days, and all the fishing guides there are as proud of their gentlemen's performances as if they were their own. They reckon their honour concerned, and banter each other about the failure of their employers as reflecting upon their own want of knowledge of the haunts of the fish.

We now sat down upon a green bank, close to the Gled's Nest wood, and had out our little basket of refreshments. I gave Sandy a plentiful supply for both. "Now, Sandy, eat your fill, and give Johnny the leavings." This is a favourite joke with Sandy, and Johnny is obliged to shield himself from its point by chuckling as heartily as he can. The Glenlivat was soon uncorked; and when I was taking my modicum, mixed with the clear water of the spring, I overheard Johnny complaining of the scarcity of the "sma' stells which were ance thick eneuch on Loch Ow," and reprobating the tyranny of our rulers, "wha hinnered folk frae doin' what they liket best theirsels wi' their ain pickle barley." Sandy likes his whisky raw, but is "*very fond o' a drap water after 't!*" The first time I gave him a glass into his paralytic hand, he spilt about two-thirds. I now insist upon holding the glass to his mouth myself. This indignity Sandy resisted at first, but I was peremptory, and he now contrives to keep me between him and Johnny, who is slily keeking round. When he has got his glass, however, he seems to think it a good job well over, and occasionally attempts some wit. I never like to see his sorrowful face then, or even to hear his joke; it seems as if uttered in bitterness of heart.

I could not resist having a peep into the kite's nest. She had no eggs yet, but all was ready for them, plenty of soft warm odds-and-ends for the lining. The two birds, balancing themselves at a great height above, kept strict watch over our movements. It is a great pity that the kite has become so rare, for it always gives a sort of finishing touch to our pine-clothed hills.

The breeze had freshened. The squalls had settled into a steady gale, and we were fully seven miles from Cladich. I wished, at least, to try some of the best ground on our way home, having little hope of pulling the whole distance against such a head-wind. Sandy, however, was unable to make any way; and upon

Johnny's complaining that the boat was drifting back, fairly gave in. I had always relieved the old man when we had to cross the loch, or go quickly past bad fishing-ground, upon which occasions I used to hear Johnny taunting him. When I took the oar, Sandy always had his revenge, by "You've met your match noo, lad." Since it was impossible to fish any of the way back, I dried my lines along the shore, and determined to enjoy the lonely walk to the inn. The road for some miles was a steep mountain-track, which seemed only fitted for a flock of goats. On some parts of this dismal region the sun seldom shines, and on others scarce a ray penetrates all the winter. The whole hill was studded with ragged rocks and stones, and a more dreary path could hardly be imagined: gloomy without grandeur. Slowly we plodded to accommodate old Sandy, whose short breath effectually stopped his wild legends.

We had nearly gained the summit, from which there is a charming view of the loch, when Johnny, who had sauntered on a few paces before, stopped suddenly, and pointing to a little bing of stones—"This is the Tinkler's Cairn." "Deed, no," says Sandy, with an air of superior knowledge; "I'll show the Tinkler's Cairn." And stumping on a few paces further, "This is the very bit where the tinkler was murdered." I felt a thrill of horror. A more appropriate place for a deed of blood could not have been chosen; it looked like haunted ground, so bleak and bare and lonely, with its stern rocks of perpetual gloom. After carefully examining the little cairn of stones, which is always reared over the spot where a dead body is found upon the mountains, I asked Sandy to relate the story, the substance of which is as follows:—A tinker and his termagant wife had long travelled the country. He was much older than his wife, who was a woman of immense muscular power, and nearly six feet high. "The puir body," said Sandy, "had little peace wi' her. A perfect she-deevil was Kirsty; I kent her weel. Mony a day after the deed was done she travelled the country, and her sons are to the fore yet." One day they left Cladich, and took their course over this mountain, in the way of their trade. From what motive is not known, but when they came to this spot, she seized a stone, murdered her wretched husband, then coolly walked on to the next shieling, where she slept, and in the morning pursued her way through the hills. A shepherd soon after discovered the poor tinker, lying stark and gory upon his cold hard bed. The woman was taken up, but dismissed for want of evidence. Life was held light in the Highlands in those days, and soon little was said or thought about the poor lost tinker or his tyrant mate.

I felt relieved to quit this dismal scene, and to descend the more sunny side of the hill. We were now threading the waving woods of Sonachan and Rock Hill, where the blithe mavis was pouring its evening melody from the topmost bough of many a tall pine or shadowy beech. I took the opportunity of explaining to Johnny that the large "stells" paid a deal o' money to Government, which they could not do if the little ones were allowed to compete and pay nothing; that Government paid an army with this money to keep the French from coming over, and taking him where he would never see a glass of whisky more: that if he objected to pay soldiers in this way, he must e'en go and be a "soger" himself for nothing, to prevent the aforesaid French inroad. This last piece of logic evidently had some effect; and I question if Johnny will long for the strong waters of "Loch Ow'," the next time he is so fortunate as to be presented with a glass from the large "stells" of Glenlivat or Glen Islay.

Arrived at Cladich, my first step was to order in the steelyard, when my fish proved 15½ lb. odd, so must have been nearly sixteen when taken out of the water. I had killed in Loch Vennacher, the year before, with single gut, a clean salmon which weighed 17 lb. when brought home. This salmon did not make near so fierce a run as the Loch Awe trout with gimp. I have heard gentlemen speak slightingly of the best trout when compared with salmon; but let them have one of these Loch Awe monsters on their hooks, in as good condition as mine was, and I venture to say they will not complain of the want of mettle in the trout. I have no doubt that the salmo-ferox is superior, both in strength and spirit, to the salmo-salar. Unless the ferox is in first-rate condition, his head is very ugly, and looks much too large for his body. This was not the case with the specimen I have just described; his head is smaller, and his shoulder more round than any I have ever taken; on which account I had him preserved by Fenton* in George Street, Edinburgh.

I took the road at five next morning, to be in time for the Inverary steamboat, which left at seven; but, even at that early hour, poor Sandy, with his fragment of a hat in his hand, was waiting at the "brae-fit" to wish me a "gude journey." Having shaken him heartily by the hand, I turned my back, for a time, upon these cherished scenes of beauty, grandeur, and romance.

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* I consider Tommy Fenton the best artist in the kingdom, not excepting Leadbeater of London. He comes from the Highlands, and, having seen and studied the creatures in their native haunts, is unrivalled at "positions."

DEER-STALKING

THIS first of British sports can only be enjoyed by the few Highland proprietors who still maintain their forests, and those to whom their permission is extended. Still, if the many keen sportsmen who are panting to try their rifles upon a gallant stag were thoroughly entered at deer-stalking, they might find less cause to regret their privation than they now imagine. In the first place, no sport is more ruled by the weather; again, one is so dependent on the skill and tact of the stalker, in whose hands, for some time at least, you must be content to act like a mere puppet. And when the deer are driven, a single false move, or the mistaking of a signal by the hill-men employed, may spoil all. In every other kind of shooting the sportsman ought to trust to his own resources and foresight; but in deer-stalking, unless he has passed his life in the forest, and is thoroughly acquainted with every correi, crag, and knoll, he had much better trust to those who are. Without this knowledge, it is impossible for any one to tell how the wind will blow upon a given point: sometimes it may be north on one side of a hollow and south on the other; and I have seen the mist moving slowly in one direction along the hill-side, and half-an-hour afterwards the very reverse, without any change in the wind. To account for this on the spur of the moment would often puzzle the scientific, but the unlettered hill-man, who has only been taught by the rough experience of the crag and the blast, though unable to talk theoretically on the subject, yet, from constant and acute observation, will confidently predict the result; and, taking advantage of every shifting change, bring you within fair rifle-distance of the unsuspecting herd.

To a novice, even though an expert rifle-shot, the first sight of "the antlered monarch of the waste" will almost take away the power of hitting him. But to any one accustomed to the sport and constantly practising it, the sameness abates somewhat of its intense interest: for it admits of no variety but the age and dimensions of the stag. In wild-fowl shooting, the excitement is kept alive by the various kinds of game that present themselves, from the magnificent hooper to the tiny teal. On the grouse mountains there is often the uncertainty whether the next point may be the red or the "jetty heath-cock," or whether a twiddling snipe may spring, or an Alpine hare start unexpectedly before you. It is the same uncertainty which gives zest to cover-shooting. The golden-breasted pheasant, the russet woodcock, the skulking hare or dodging coney, may all successively appear.

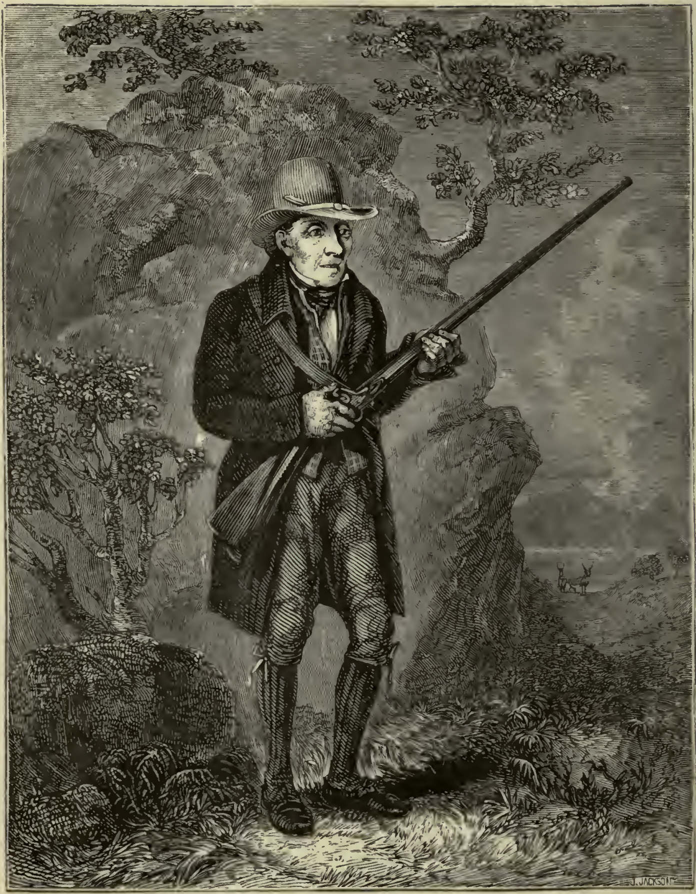
I do not mean by the above remarks to depreciate deer-stalking. It is sport for princes. I only offer them as consolation to those who undervalue the amusement within their reach, by exaggerated ideas of that above it.

No man with good nerves need despair of becoming a tolerable rifle-shot, as the great art is to take plenty of time; in fact, to shoot as coolly at a deer as at the target. The American backwoodsmen with their ill-balanced rifles can hit the jugular vein of an animal feeding or moving about, with unerring accuracy, at thirty or forty yards. Every one must see how much this depends upon nerve and coolness; and these settlers are taught the self-command, which is the basis of their dexterity, from their earliest years. I recollect being shown, by the owner, a rifle which he considered a *chef-d'œuvre* of American workmanship. The most cool-headed forester of our country would have been puzzled to do much execution with it at first. It looked and felt exactly like a toy, with its peaked and silver-mounted toe and heel-plate, long unbalanced barrel, and ludicrously small bore. Our rifles, on the contrary, are beautifully poised, and their weight enables us to take a much steadier aim at a long distance; while the ball, from being much larger, is less affected by the wind. I dare say, however, if a Highland deer-stalker and American wood-ranger, both finished adepts in their own way, were fairly matched, each would have a sovereign contempt for the dexterity of the other.

I have constantly observed that the performers most to be depended on with the rifle are what are called "poking shots;" for although the first-rate hand with the fowling-piece may often bring down the deer running in admirable style, yet upon any unexpected fair chance presenting itself, he is apt to fire too quick, forgetting the different style of shooting which is required for a rifle; while the slow man, however taken unawares, always gives himself time for deliberate aim. Any one, also, who has been practising much at snipe, or other quick shooting, will, unless quite on his guard, be almost certain to miss the deer until his hand is brought in, after which, when he again returns to the snipe, they will stand a better chance of escape, from the poking manner in which he will at first be inclined to fire at them. As a boy, I remember being much perplexed to see a gamekeeper miss a fair shot at a deer, when a few days before he had killed seven swifts out of eight flying past at "full bat;" while his father, the old forester whose likeness I have given, could scarcely have touched one, and yet seldom missed a rifle-shot. There was another man who generally accompanied them in their stalking expeditions, and whose shooting was a still greater puzzle. Although not left-handed, he shot from the left shoulder, being unable to close his left eye, and was as slow a performer as ever pulled a trigger. Flying shots he invariably missed, and, at last, seldom fired at; but ground game, except rabbits, had no chance with him. Nothing could flurry or put him out of his shooting. If the shot was not intercepted, and he was only allowed plenty of time, it was certain death.

I had twice an opportunity of seeing these three men fairly tested with the rifle. Some deer being discovered near the top of a high hill, it was arranged, as all their passes were well known, to drive them with some shepherds and their colleys. My brother and I begged hard to join the party, and were placed under charge of the gamekeeper, whose pass was one of the best. Before starting, however, the left-shouldered man wished to fire off an old load, being afraid to risk it at the deer. It was suggested that he should shoot at a hare. We had not gone far when one rose about forty yards off. Even now I think I see the cool way in which he raised his rifle, and, allowing poor puss a free stretch of thirty yards, fired. The hare dropped dead, and, when we went up, she was fairly struck between the shoulders. After a time we were safe in our passes, and the driving-party commenced their manœuvres. We soon heard the yelp of the dogs, and, shortly after, the floundering of a deer in some mossy ground immediately above the pass. Presently it made its appearance, crossing us at about sixty yards' distance. It was a beautiful chance. Taking deliberate aim, the gamekeeper fired. To our astonishment and chagrin, the deer which had been moving slowly along, bounded forward, frightened enough, but unhurt. No other chance was obtained till near the end of the day, when the old forester fired a tremendous long shot, and struck the deer, which ran for a few hundred yards, and then dropped.

Another time, when the deer had taken the water, there was a general scramble to the shore; a boat was quickly



DRAWN FROM LIFE

With his trusty flint-locked long-barrelled rifle of the last century procured, which the cunning animal no sooner saw bearing down than it turned short round, and was within a few yards of grounding, when the three aforesaid stalkers were ready to fire within fair distance. The left-shouldered man took deliberate aim at the head, the only part above water, and cut off the horns close to the skull. The deer now struck ground, and when bounding along the shore was missed by the gamekeeper, but immediately brought down in admirable style by his old father. That a man could miss a deer, and yet knock down double shots one after another at game, used to appear a complete problem to me; especially as one of his rivals could not hit a bird at all, and his father as a game-shot was not to be named in the same day with him. After a little practice myself, the solution was plain. I have seen this old man in his *eightieth year*, bring down a deer *running*, and last season had some venison sent me, killed by him, when ninety-one years old!!

As I consider this forester the finest specimen I ever met with of a Highlander of the old school, I may perhaps be allowed to mention some of his peculiarities apart from his professional avocations. His words like his shooting are slow, but sure to tell. When addressing his superiors, his manner is marked by the greatest courtesy, without the least approach to servility. He is well read in ancient history, knows all about the siege of Troy, and talks with the greatest interest of Hannibal's passage over the Alps. On one occasion, when several gentlemen were talking on a disputed point of history, he stepped forward, begged pardon for interrupting them, and cleared it up to their utter amazement. His memory is still excellent, and nothing gives him greater delight than old traditions, legends, &c. The last time I saw him, he gave us an account of some of the Roman Catholic bishops of Scotland with characteristic anecdotes. In politics he has his own peculiar opinions, is particularly jealous of the encroachments of the "Great Bear," as he calls Russia, and thinks the Allies committed an irreparable error in not partitioning France after the battle of Waterloo. No present finds greater favour than the last Newspaper; and it is curious to see the old man devouring its contents without spectacles. He would not be a true Highlander were he not a firm believer in all their superstitions. Two instances of second-sight he related to me as having happened to himself; although he is very unwilling to talk upon the subject, and I have often noticed his evasive replies to those who questioned him. I premise my account by saying, that wherever he is known, his word has never been doubted, and I would believe it as implicitly as that of the proudest peer in the realm. One day, when returning very tired from some sporting expedition, he met an acquaintance, accompanied by a young man whom he also perfectly well knew. The first stopped to ask "what sport?" he gave a short answer over his shoulder, and saw the young man walk on. That afternoon he heard he had been killed by a fall from his cart, at the very time of this rencontre. Upon questioning his companion the next day, he said there was no person with him. The other instance happened one rainy evening when looking over his kennel. He saw a man with a grape cleaning out the gutter, and called to know who had desired him to do so. The gutter-cleaner walked slowly towards him, but something having arrested his attention in the mean time, he lost sight of him, and could not make out how he had disappeared; upon inquiring of the overseer, he said this man was unwell and confined to bed. He shortly afterwards recovered, which was sufficient confirmation to the old forester of the truth of his vision, for in all cases of second-sight, where the object approaches, it is a sure sign of recovery, and when it recedes, of death. Another of his prejudices is the lucky or unlucky "first foot." Half the people of the country were one or the other with him. There was a canty old carle of a herd whose happy cheerful face was enough to banish care from every other brow; but the old forester had unfortunately met him on the morning of some unlucky day. Now as it happened that this conscientious old herd, whose boast it was "I never did ahint ma maister's back what I wad na do afore his face," was generally one of the earliest astir, he was oftener the "first foot" than any other body; and as he came crooning some old Gaelic song, with his staff over his shoulder, and gave his blithe salutation, "Goot mornin, goot mornin; goot sport, goot sport!" a stranger would wonder at the look of gloom which overshadowed the forester's face, and the scarcely articulate grunt which was his only reply, sometimes followed by the half-muttered exclamation, "Chock that body!" To shoot a wild-swan was reckoned a most unlucky feat. One severe winter, when after water-fowl with another man, four hoopers were discovered close to the shore. His companion eagerly pointed them out, when the old forester, who had most likely seen them first, coolly replied, "You—see,—John,—we'll—just let them alone!" The only thing not truly national about him was substituting a pinch of snuff for a quid of tobacco; and when out on the hills he has often expressed his belief, that the moss-water he was sometimes obliged to drink would long ago have been the death of him, had he not always followed it up by the antidote of a pinch which "killed all the venom."

But the character of my old friend has beguiled me into too long a digression. I must now return to the rifle.

Every man before firing at deer must be thoroughly acquainted with his own—a point even more important with a rifle than a shot-gun. Under eighty yards it will most likely shoot a little high; and if the wind is at all strong, it will alter the direction of the ball fully a foot at a hundred yards, for which allowance must be made. The best place to hit a deer, unless he is lying down, and so close as to tempt one to try the head, is just behind the shoulder. If struck fair, he will most likely bound forward ten or twenty yards, and then drop. One that I shot ran fifty yards before it fell, although the lower part of the heart was touched. When this occurs, you may be sure it will never rise again. If, on the contrary, it falls instantaneously, unless shot through the head, neck, or spine, it may very possibly spring up on a sudden, and perhaps escape altogether. If struck too far back, a deer may sometimes run for half a day, and the wound has even been known to heal up, but is more likely to prove fatal the next day. When a deer is discovered lying down, in such a situation that he might dip out of sight the moment he rises, and only his horns are visible, the sportsman should advance with extreme caution until the deer hears him, when he will most likely slowly raise and turn his head before springing up. Now is the time to shoot him between the eye and the ear.

The most propitious day for deer-stalking is a cloudy one with blinks of sunshine: exactly such as you would choose for fishing. When the sky is cloudless, and the sun very dazzling, the herd are apt to see you at a great distance, and take alarm. High and changing wind is always very bad, as it keeps them moving about in a wild and uneasy state. In such weather it is better, if possible, to wait till it settles a little, and take advantage of the first calm. If the breeze be light, they will not move much, but a strong steady wind lasting for some days will always make the deer change their ground, by facing it often for miles. Mist is the worst of all, as the deer are pretty sure to see *you* before *you* see *them*. Always advance on deer from above, as they are much less apt to look up than down a hill. If possible, have the sun at *your back*, and in *their face*. With this advantage you may even venture to approach them from below. (Birds, on the contrary, always look up, and it is best to stalk *them* from lower ground.) If it is a quiet shot, and the sun is at your back, wait for a clear blink* before making your near approach. Of course every one knows that it is out of the question, *under any circumstances*, to attempt advancing on deer unless the wind be favourable; so all other directions are subject to this.

In correis and hollows it is quite impossible to know how the wind will blow upon a particular point, *unless you have marked every change of wind upon every point of the correi.*

In high wind, deer are always difficult to drive. Should they make a *pause*, they will in all likelihood turn in the face of a hundred men, and not suffer themselves to be driven further. As the wind becomes stronger the higher you ascend, the deer on the tops of the hills are most difficult to drive. The lowest ground is always the best for *driving* on a windy day.

In south and west wind, the deer are far more easily stalked, as the colder and sharper north and east keeps them always moving and beating against it. When fired at, they will go double the distance with an east or north wind.

Deer will go far more readily to the high passes in the morning, and to the low passes in the evening; so this ought always to be attended to.

Never stalk *between* two herds, if it can be helped; it is always considered bad stalking.

Ox-deer, or "heaviers," as the foresters call them, (most likely a corruption from the French *hiver*,) are wilder than either hart or hind. They often take post upon a height that gives a look-out all round, which makes them very difficult to stalk. Although not so good when December is past, still they are in season all the winter; hence their French designation. Yeld-hinds are also fit for the table till the end of January. The latter are easily distinguished by an experienced forester from their light colour. The ears of the "heaviers" are always cropped, that they may at once be known from the hinds. This deformity makes their hornless heads look perfectly hideous. When stags grow very old, their horns go back, just like a tree going to decay. Sometimes a stag, neither a rig nor a heavier, is hornless, and even "takes the rut."

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* Before fishing a sure salmon-cast, do just the reverse. *If possible*, wait for an obscuring cloud.

The best time for a quiet stalking shot is either early in the morning or late in the evening, as the deer are not so much on the alert, and are busy feeding. It is at these times also that they are apt to come down from the high to the low ground.

Some forests are so crowded with hinds and calves that stalking between deer is often unavoidable: this is the most difficult of all stalks. You have to keep a look-out upon the deer on each side, as well as those in the middle, which you are advancing on. Should those on either side catch sight of the sportsman, or get his wind, he may still have his shot, *if there is any cover in front*, by *running* forward under shelter of it. Sometimes when the deer on both sides have taken the alarm, even should the ground be bare, those in the middle will stand staring, trying to discover what had frightened the others. Under these circumstances, whenever the sportsman sees the deer on either side begin to move, his only chance of a shot is to *run on;* and perhaps the attention of the centre ones may be so fixed on their companions as to allow him to get within range. When the wind is *fair*, the best plan is to have *good patience* until the deer feed up, without attempting to stalk between them. When you have a side wind, however, it is very difficult to manage, especially with a train of men and dogs, to all of whom the stalker must give his signal at once, perhaps with only twenty yards of ground to come and go upon.

When stalking a herd, or between deer, *down hill*, the best way is to slide upon the back, with your feet foremost. This can be done by leaning upon the elbows, and using the heels of the shoes to draw on the body. The knees will thus be prevented from rising too high. Should you attempt to crawl down head foremost, the back will often be two feet higher than the head, and the stalker never be aware of it. In sliding down the hill, both stalker and sportsman must have their eye upon the deer; and, if they raise their heads, must keep the exact position they were in when the deer looked up. It is very bad generalship, either with deer or wild-fowl, to clap down quickly, as they at once see this manœuvre. Instead of doing so, remain steady as a rock, until the deer begin to feed again, or look in a different direction. Should they suspect you, and thus render it necessary to move out of sight, withdraw yourself *inch by inch*, so as to prevent their seeing the *least motion*. In stalking up hill, you must crawl sometimes upon hand and knee, occasionally flat upon your face when the deer come more prominently into view. As they always look down hill, greater caution is required than when stalking from above. Should two good stalkers be noticed by deer, one ought always to remain where they were first perceived, the other advancing alone. If the deer are in sight, and not far off, a knowing forester often restrains the eagerness of the novice, by telling him to "coont the grass as they go along;" that is, to count the deer as they raise their heads for a moment when feeding up. This, by ensuring a very slow advance, doubles the chances of their escaping the notice of the deer, and keeps the young stalker more cool. The forester all the time has his eye on the leading deer. When selecting your hart, raise the rifle most leisurely to the shoulder. If brought up in a hurry, or in the same way that a quick shot takes aim with his fowling-piece, you are almost certain to miss.

A good forester generally becomes very nervous in the long run, from the bungling of some gentlemen, and the ill-temper of others, together with his constant anxiety to procure them fair chances.

The quick sight of a skilful forester in first discovering deer will appear miraculous to a stranger to the sport, and, unless quite bewildered, he cannot fail to admire the generalship which follows. The whole ground is as perfectly known to his guide as his own pleasure-grounds to himself. Every hollow, every knoll, is taken advantage of; every shifting turn of the wind, up the one or round the other, is surely predicted, until, to his own utter amazement, the panting Sassenach or Lowlander is told that he is within fair rifle-distance of a bevy of noble harts.

After deer have been stalked and shot at, they become much wilder; the best sport at the old harts is therefore obtained at the beginning of the season. They generally keep together, and when their stately mien and branching antlers are seen in the distance, it is enough to inspirit the most apathetic; but when told to cock his double-barrelled rifle for a shot, I could well excuse a novice for being scarcely able to obey. When there are hinds in the herd, they often present themselves between you and the unsuspecting harts; but even should they be at a distance, great caution is necessary, as, if one hind gets a glimpse of the crouching enemy, the whole herd, stags and all, are sure to scamper away, amidst the bitter execrations of the forester upon its hornless head.

The next best time for a shot at a fine old stag, after they have become wild, is about the beginning of October, when each lot of hinds is sure to contain a good hart. The chances then may often not be so good, but from the stags being dispersed, there are more of them. If deer are feeding forward, it requires very nice calculation, when at a distance, to know the point they will arrive at by the time you have neared them, especially as a shower of rain or a gust of wind will quicken their motions. But if the stalker is not far from the herd, which is feeding up to his place of concealment, with a favourable wind, he should not grudge waiting; for, by sending round drivers to windward of the deer, they are often apt to turn and face them. I can't say that driving, under any circumstances, gives half the pleasure that stalking does; for my own part, I would rather kill one stalked hart than several driven. Driving, however, upon a large scale has a most imposing effect, and, although it cannot be otherwise than injurious to a forest, yet the exhilarating nature of the whole proceedings, in which so many friends may join, often makes the proprietor overlook the consternation and panic it creates among the wild and timid herd. Some part of the forest is selected to which the deer are to be driven; a great number of hill-men and shepherds, who thoroughly understand what they are about, are then sent to the furthest extremity to bring all the deer they can collect to this spot; the passes, of course, being well known, are occupied by the sportsmen with their rifles. The drivers sometimes hallooing, and sometimes giving their wind, gradually contract their circle; the deer are huddled together, and, finding the only clear ground in the direction of the rifles, slowly and cautiously take their doomed way. There is often great difficulty in driving them, as they are always obliged to go with the wind, which their natural instinct of self-preservation makes them very unwilling to do, and, if they possibly can, they always face it. When the herd come within distance of the rifles, great mischief often ensues; the nervous and indifferent shot firing into the centre of the living mass, while even the experienced deer-stalker, in singling out the stag-royal, may sometimes wound a couple of hinds beyond him.

So much for driving on grand occasions, which gives the shooter a tolerably snug sinecure until the game comes up to his hand. But when it is practised in a small way, there is no sport which more calls into play his pluck and endurance of fatigue. He first climbs to the ridge of the hill, where he is at once seen by the hawk-eyed driver who has taken his station near the foot, or on the opposite brow, and has marked with his glass every herd at feed or rest on the face below. As soon as he has selected one, he attempts to drive it up the hill, towards the sportsman, either by hallooing or showing himself; at the same time giving warning by the manner of his halloo which way they are likely to take. The sportsman must be thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, or have some person with him who is; and, running from one "snib" to another, in obedience to the signal below, catch sight of the horns of the herd, as, with serpentine ascent, they wind their wary way. From the zigzag manner in which they often come up, it is very difficult to make sure which pass will be the favoured one, and I have been within a few hundred yards of the antlers when the prolonged shout from below has warned me that I had an almost perpendicular shoulder of the hill to breast at my utmost speed before I could hope to obtain the much-desired shot. If the wind is at all high, so determined are the deer to face it, that, unless there are a great number of drivers, one herd after another may take the wrong direction; but, if the day is favourable, with only a light breeze, a knowing driver or two will generally manage to send them up to the rifle.

When the deer have selected their pass, should you be within fair distance, with both barrels cocked, beware of making the slightest motion, *especially of the head*, until you mean to fire. Even when perfectly in view, if you lie flat and don't move, the herd are almost sure to pass. One or two hinds generally take the lead. The fine old harts, if there are any in the herd, often come next, but sometimes, if very fat and lazy, they lag in the rear. When the first few hinds have fairly passed, the rest are sure to follow, until their line is broken, and their motions are quickened, by a double volley from the rifle.

When stalking (September 1840) in Glenartney forest, by the kind permission of the noble owner, I had as fine a chance as man could wish spoiled by the scarcely audible whimper of a dog. I was placed in a most advantageous spot, within near distance of the pass. Presently an old hind came picking her stately steps, like a lady of the old school ushering her company to the dining-room. Next her came a careless three-year-old hart, looking very anxious to get forward, and perfectly regardless of danger. All was now safe, I felt sure of my shot; when, horror of horrors! a slight whimper was heard. The old hind listened, halted, and then turned short round upon the young hart, who instantly followed her example, and the whole herd ran helter-skelter down the hill. The unfortunate sound proceeded from one of the forester's two colleys, the only dogs Lord Willoughby allows in the forest; they are kept for the purpose of bringing to bay any deer badly wounded, and are never slipped upon other occasions. The mar-plot above alluded to is an old dog, and very good for the purpose; he had winded without seeing the deer—hence his mistake.

Glenartney is a beautiful little forest, walled round by fine green hills, but the deer being too numerous for its extent, are rather small. It also stands high, and is not so well sheltered as might be desired; on which account the deer, when the winter storm sets in severely, although fed to the full, cannot remain to eat their food, and are obliged to seek the shelter of the woods for many miles round, far beyond their bounds. At night they wander to the turnip-fields for sustenance, where numbers are shot by poachers, who watch the gates and openings into the fields. One man boasted to me that he had in that manner killed six during one storm, with a common fowling-piece loaded with ball. The turnip-field where he performed this feat was more than twelve miles from the forest.

Perhaps as fine deer as any in the kingdom are those of the Black Mount. The cup* on the top of the horns of many, according to Highland phrase, would hold a gill of whisky; and yet there are heads now preserved in Taymouth Castle, which show that their forefathers, though fewer in number, were even greater than they. The Black Mount is twenty-one miles long by twelve broad; and the Marquis of Breadalbane, notwithstanding his numerous engagements in public life, has not neglected this noble appanage of a Highland proprietor. No expense or

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* The three top prongs of the horn, growing out together, form a cup. There is no cup at all except in the finest and oldest stags.

trouble is spared which can contribute to the winter subsistence of the deer, or protect them from poachers. Patches of different kinds of food are sown in the valleys, and left uncut, to which they flock during the severity of winter. The forest has plenty of green summer food, and abundance of long heather, which affords shelter in cold weather, and is greedily eaten in the snow-storm, when hardly any other food can be reached. I shot the subject of the woodcut there about the beginning of October 1840, when the forest was in all its glory, and nothing but sounds of rivalry and defiance were heard in every quarter. The head is not by any means the largest size, but may be taken as a fair average specimen. The fallow-deer's head was from life, one of the finest I ever saw.

The day I shot the red-deer was perhaps the most unpropitious for stalking which could possibly have been chosen. In the morning, the mist was rolling lazily along the sides of the mountains in dense masses, and it was evident there would be rain before the close of the day. It was enough to damp the heart of the most ardent deer-stalker, but I determined (having little time to spare) to abide by the forester's opinion. His answer was, that "we would just do our best; but if we were unsuccessful to-day, I must e'en wait for to-morrow." With this determination we started for the forest, followed by an under-keeper, with one of Lord Breadalbane's fine deer-hounds, led in a leash. A slight breeze at first sprang up, and partially cleared away the mist from some of the lower hills. The quick eye of Robertson immediately discovered a deer lying down upon the ridge of one of them. His glass was instantly fixed. "There, sir, if you could manage that fellow, you would have one of the finest harts in the forest." "Well, suppose we go round by the back of the hill, and come down that hollow, we should be within fair distance from the rock." "If he'll only lie still, and give us time enough." This, however, the stag had determined not to do, for when we came to the hollow, he had risen from his rocky couch, and was immediately detected by Robertson, quietly taking his breakfast, among his hinds, a considerable way below. The place was so open all round that it was impossible to get near him, and the mist soon afterwards came on so thick that we only knew that the deer were all round us by their incessant bellowing. The forester looked much disconcerted; for, in addition to the mist, a drizzling rain began to descend. We sat down behind a hillock, and I desired the under-keeper to produce the provision-basket. "If there was only a breeze!" says Robertson; "and I do believe it's comin', for the draps o' rain are much heavier." And so it proved, for the mist again partially cleared. We hastened to take advantage of the change; and Robertson, ten yards in advance, mounting every knoll, and searching every hollow with an eye that seemed to penetrate the very mist, suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and signalled us to do the same. A roar like that of a bull presently let us know the cause, and on a little amphitheatre about five hundred yards off, his profile in full relief, stood as noble a stag as ever "tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky." There he was, like knight of old, every now and then sounding his trumpet of defiance, and courting the battle and the strife. Nor did he challenge in vain, for while we were admiring his majestic attitude, another champion rushed upon him, and a fierce encounter followed. We could distinctly hear the crashing of their horns, as they alternately drove each other to the extremity of the lists. "I wish the ball was through the heart o' one o' ye!" muttered the under-keeper. His wishes were soon to be realised; for the younger knight, who seemed to have the advantage in courage and activity, at last fairly drove his adversary over the knoll and disappeared after him. Robertson now rushed forward, signing to me to follow, and peeping cautiously over the scene of contest, slunk back again, and crawled on hand and knee up a hollow to a hillock, immediately beyond: I following his example. When we had gained this point, he took another wary survey, and whispered that the hinds were on the other side of the knoll, within thirty yards. It was now a nervous time, but I could not help admiring the coolness of the forester. Without the least appearance of flurry, he had both eyes and ears open, and gave his directions with distinctness and precision. "That will do; there goes a hind, the whole will follow. Place your rifle on that stone, you'll get a famous chance about eighty yards."—"He'll come at last," he again whispered, as hind after hind slowly passed in review, when a roar was heard immediately below us.

" As sure as I'm leevin', he's comin' on the very tap o' us. Hold the rifle this way, sir, and shoot him between the horns the moment his head comes ow'r the knowe." I had scarcely altered my position, when head, horns and all, appeared in full view. Seeing us in a moment, he was out of sight at a bound, but, taking a direction round the base of the hillock, presented his broadside a beautiful cross-shot. I had plenty of time for deliberate aim, and the Red Knight of the Wilds lay low and bleeding.

It was now nearly four o'clock, and the forester had some doubts whether we could get him to Inveruran that night; but as I was anxious to start early in the morning, we despatched the follower for a cart, and with great difficulty dragged the stag by the horns down the hill to the road. Notwithstanding the weather, I had been delighted with my expedition, and only regretted having killed the younger and victorious champion instead of his more bulky rival. During our walk to the inn, I had many anecdotes of former bloody deeds in the forest from Robertson, and not a few where the balls had flown scatheless. One, in particular, amused me. The Marquis, accompanied by two friends—one of them, I should imagine, more famous for his scientific than sporting qualifications—were stalking some very fine harts. When within rifle-distance, his lordship and one of his friends were crawling over a knoll, in order to select the best of the lot. " What are they about up there?" said the virtuoso. " *There* are the deer." Bang! bang! Off went the harts in a twinkling, wishing, I have no doubt, that they had always such fair warning when danger was near.

We passed, during the day, several forest-baths, in full use; *i. e.* moss-holes where the stags plunge up to the neck and roll about to cool themselves, in summer and autumn. When they come out again, black as pitch, they look like the evil genii of the mountain. In former times poachers used to fasten spears with the points upward in these places, and when the stag threw himself into the hole, he was impaled.

Lord Breadalbane has a very fine kennel of dogs exclusively for bringing the wounded deer to bay. They are for the most part a breed between the foxhound and greyhound, but some are between the deerhound and foxhound. The former are reckoned the best winded. The forester is justly proud of these dogs, mentioning that some of them, when chasing a cold (unwounded) hart with hinds, were so knowing, that, should the hart give them the slip at a burn, and run down it, they would stop their pursuit of the hinds, recover his track, and hold him at bay all night should no one come to their relief. The cunning of the old Forest rangers is also remarkable. Once, when some young dogs were being entered at the two-year-old harts, a stag-royal presented himself, but, seeing he was not the immediate object of pursuit, he witnessed the whole chase from the shelter of a plantation, and when the foresters returned, they again started him, close to where he was first put up, when he dashed into the thicket of the wood. There was a tame one kept at one of the shooting-lodges which attacked every one but the foresters, and at last was removed to the park at Taymouth. This fellow became so savage and expert with his antlers, that he killed, I have been told, two horses, and no one dared to pass his haunt unless he knew them.

The finest red-deer head I ever saw was that of a park-deer killed last autumn by a stab in the flank from another in the Duke of Atholl's park at Blair. Of course high feeding was the cause of his immense horns. Such a head is never met with in a wild state. I have now a five-year-old in my brother's park at Rossdhu, and mean to try whether good keep will have the like effect upon *his* antlers. He is very savage: no one dares to go near him without a dog. The Atholl deer was fourteen years old.

WILD-GOATS

I HAVE often thought that for those who have a taste for deer-stalking, without the opportunity, it might be no bad substitute to have a flock or two of goats upon a remote range of hills. The idea suggested itself to me from having heard and seen a good deal of the nature and habits of a few kept wild upon an island in Loch Lomond. These goats, originally a breed between the Welsh and Highland, were very large, and the oldest inhabitant does not recollect when they were first introduced. After having been completely left to themselves for a few generations, they became very cunning and suspicious, always haunting the most out-of-the-way craggy places they could find; and one precipice in particular has been called from time immemorial Crap-na-gour, or Hill of the Goats. They have now rather deteriorated, from the fine old wild ones having been killed off, and some of the tame kind substituted to cross the breed. The hair of some of the old "Billies" of the wild breed was eighteen inches long; and I have contrasted a horn of the last fine specimen of the race, shot many years ago, with a good-sized one of the domesticated species. To stalk these half-tame goats afforded no small diversion, and I have seen several sportsmen engaged nearly a whole day before the fatal shot was fired. But in their wilder state, I am told, they showed amazing game, tact, and cunning in eluding an enemy. The hero, whose horn I have represented, managed to escape several of the most experienced hands in the country, some with ball and others with buck-shot, for a couple of days. He was brought down on the evening of the second day, after being hard struck a short time before; and I have been assured that even larger than he have been killed upon the island, with horns proportionably finer.

Another circumstance also made me imagine that goat-stalking might be practicable. One of my father's tenants, who farmed the remote range of Glen-Douglas, had a flock of goats pastured among the precipices. This flock was always under the command of the shepherds and their dogs. A fine old Billy, however, broke away from the rest, and spurned all control. This lasted upwards of a year, when he became so completely wild that it required half a dozen shepherds, with their guns, to range the mountains for some days before he could be shot.

As further proof how strong the love of freedom is implanted in the goat, I last summer heard of another patriarch of the flock, who appeared also disgusted with the monotony of his tame life, and, like the captive Bedouin longing for the desert, again sought his congenial wilds. He left Tyndrum, wandering from mountain to mountain, a passing shepherd now and then catching a distant glimpse of him in his progress, and was at last discovered to have chosen his quarters in a retreat as savage and solitary as that romantic district could afford.

I am aware that many objections might be raised against my suggestion; first, that the goats would never be wild enough to afford sport, and that, if they were, they would be apt to take refuge among inaccessible rocks and precipices, where no man could stalk them. I own that it would be many years before goats could become quite wild, but if a fine breed were turned out on some of the steepest and least frequented of our mountains, and especially if they were never disturbed or *brought to bay by dogs*, I have no doubt that their progeny would become fit for stalking. And as to sheltering themselves in rocks and precipices, they would be far less apt to do this when they had acquired confidence in other means of escape. I only, however, mention goat-stalking as an untried amusement, and think it might be worth while for the proprietors of Highland mountains to make the experiment. Sheep-farms, where deer never remain, would answer the purpose. Goats do not interfere with the sheep, and generally choose the roughest ground where the pasture is of least value. It is unnecessary to say that the old males would be uneatable, but the mountain-fed kids are reckoned very delicious.

CRAP-NA-GOWER

THE heather was bare and run to seed, the bell had long faded, and the grouse were wild and packed, when I received a note from my brother to say "that, in consequence of the mischief the flock of wild goats had done to the newly planted trees on his deer island, he had determined to extirpate them ; but had reserved the two old Billies for my rifle." Well pleased, I obeyed the summons.

The evening I came to Rossdhu was dull and cold; rather *watery* looking for the west; but at grey of next morning I threw up my window, and was happy to find that it had cleared to bright starlight, with a crisp night frost. The ivy owl was sounding his melancholy note, foreboding abdication, while old chanticleer welcomed the first faint streaks of the dawn by a blast from his cheery trumpet. It had a curious effect, and seemed a contention between the spirits of night and morning. It was a good omen, for the sun rose in cloudless lustre, and by breakfast-time was flaming down upon the antiquated beeches, now in their rich and variegated autumnal tints, and casting his warmest glow over the red and withered bracken upon the slopes of the distant hills.

I found the bearded chief was at least ten years old, and his henchman about two years younger. They had been the progeny of a cross between the original wild black goat of the rock, and a tame white Billy of very large size, who fell a victim to the change of life; having hanged himself by the horns on a yew-tree, in attempting to feed upon the higher branches. They had been bred among the craggy ravines on the unfrequented part of the island, and had never left them. A four-oared yawl was soon manned by hardy Highlandmen, and we pushed off for Crap-na-Gower.

There is nothing more exhilarating than the air of these calm autumn mornings. The breath of spring may be more fresh and fragrant, but it is not so buoyant nor clear. The little robin seems to feel its effect; for his monotonous but plaintive wail, sadly sweet, like a lament for summer, is always loudest then. Our loch was calm as glass, and reflected the wooded islands and copses of various hues, relieved here and there by the dark Scotch firs, with their knotted and twisted branches. A black-backed or giant gull, perched upon a large stone at the end of Inch Moan, was shouting his rough music (which sounded doubly atrocious over the calm expanse) to another couple, floating at a distance so airily upon the clear water, they scarcely seemed to touch it. The giant gull is a beautiful fellow, with his snowy breast and dusky wing; and, barring his voice, is the greatest ornament to our inland lochs during summer and autumn, of any bird except the osprey.

Leaving master Black-back in possession of his platform, like many as noisy an orator equally *au fait* at gull rhetoric, we stood out for the middle of the Loch, in order to have a good view of the rugged part of Inch Lonach, the territory of the goats. As we expected, we soon twigged their white coats in broad contrast to the dark heather and darker yew-trees. Upon inspecting them through our telescopes, we found they were in a sort of rocky hollow, a capital situation for stalking, and busily engaged in cropping the lower branches of a venerable yew. I saw, with pleasure, that there was considerable difference in their size. When we got to the island, they told us that we could not help knowing the patriarch, as his horns came down to the small of his back.

As my rifle was only a single barrel, I was anxious to make sure of *him* first, in case he might hide, if alarmed by my firing at the other. Should he do so, we might not find him again all day.

Crap-na-Gower, the stronghold of the goats, is perhaps the most fascinating spot of the far-famed Loch Lomond. It is placed midway between the lovely islands at the foot, and the rugged and romantic grandeur at the head of the Loch, and quite commands the best views of both. It rises perpendicularly out of the Loch, by an almost inaccessible succession of rocks and shaggy heather, full of deep holes and caverns. Seen at a distance from a boat, with its wild-goats browsing among the grey rocks and scaurs, shaded here and there by a clump of reverend yews, a finer study for the artist's pencil could not be found. It was to this lone spot, where the poor goats had braved the winter frost and summer sun of many a long year, that I now bent my steps, the messenger of their destruction.

We thoroughly knew all the passes, and stationed sentries in them to intercept the goats, should they attempt to cross to the other side of the island, which is about two miles long. When they found their progress blockaded, they would immediately return to Crap-na-Gower. My business then was to find out the pass they would use on their way back, and lie concealed. This was not difficult, as the barricaders in front would give me the signal. A very slight one might suffice, as I was also well acquainted with all the back passes.

I took my telescope in my hand, and was followed by a keeper, carrying my rifle. A circuit of a mile, to gain the wind, brought us to the far side of Crap-na-Gower. We were then about a quarter of a mile to leeward of the two poor goats, who were unsuspectingly munching their delicious repast of yew-twigs, in the full enjoyment of a midday sun. Our near approach was over a succession of rocks and knolls covered with heather, so long as nearly to reach the waist. We were constantly kept upon the alert, for this heather often concealed holes that it would have been no joke to have stumbled into; and were also annoyed by the *sunk rocks*, which are often covered as effectually by this long heather as by the waters of the deep.

Having gained the knoll, on the other side of which we hoped to find our victims, we held a consultation as to the point of attack. This arranged, we slunk very warily round the angle of the knoll, in case the goats had moved. It was well we were so cautious; for scarcely had we turned the peak, when the head and long horns of one of the hirci rose into view, not more than fifty yards off. He was rearing himself upon his hind legs to reach the branch of a yew-tree, which made the apparition of his head so sudden. I at once dropped into the long heather, and beckoned to the keeper for my rifle. When I crawled forward upon hands and knees, it was quite evident the poor creature had no idea of an enemy. He continued his yew-cropping, occasionally scratching his shoulder with his long pointed horn, which seemed admirably adapted for the purpose. Sometimes he would rear himself upon his hind legs, to seize a twig just out of his reach when on all fours. I was quite amused at his activity, and the length of time he could remain in this erect posture.

All my endeavours to ascertain whether he was the ten or eight year old were unavailing, and it was impossible to move further, as, in trying to get a sight of the other, I might probably scare both. From his position being rather above me, he looked very imposing, and I felt pretty sure he was the patriarch. Raising my rifle by inches, I fired. The ball struck him true in the centre of the shoulder; but, from his being above me, it took a slanting direction, (as we afterwards found,) and he did not drop. Up I started; and, at the same instant, the old goat bounded from the opposite side of the tree, and took the lead of his wounded companion. It was now apparent I had struck the junior. A severe race the keeper and I had to keep sight of him; but in vain. The last we saw of him was lagging far behind the other, his snow-white shoulder bedabbled with blood. He soon after disappeared among the rugged ground, and was seen no more that day. The old chief, however, kept on at a swing gallop by himself. Knowing that our sentries would soon turn him, and that his object would then be the rocks of Crap-na-Gower, we kept watching for the signal which was to make us aware of his course. It sounded, and I was again at my post for a shot.

After waiting for half-an-hour, I saw the tips of his horns coming straight for my ambush, and making for the wilds of the island; which, if he gained, adieu to him for that day. Before he quite came up, I raised myself and fired. He halted, and changed his course, but I was up to him. I knew that if I could, by taking a short cut, gain the pass where it entered Crap-na-Gower, I should be pretty sure of an excellent chance. Billy had a long circuit to make, and was, moreover, a good deal blown, so the odds were in my favour.

Throwing off my shooting-jacket, waistcoat, and neckcloth, I cut away at full speed, though in danger every moment of tumbling into one or other of the *natural* pitfalls, or of knocking my rifle to pieces against a rock. Panting and toiling under the burning sun, I at last arrived at the pass, and had scarcely five minutes to recover breath, when William, equally done up, appeared, thunder-ing over the adjoining height. I was in no hurry this time, and allowed him to cross fair, and so present the full target of his side; as I well knew that nothing could keep him from the rocks but a rifle-ball. Crack! The poor animal gave a cry, something between a bleat and a howl, (it was far too human to be agreeable,) walked on a hundred yards, and then stopped. It was plain his race was run. I loaded as quickly as I could, to put him out of his misery; but whenever I attempted to move, he braced himself up for a last struggle. With one desponding look at his own Crap-na-Gower, which he now despaired of reaching, and was never to see again, he turned his back upon it, and hobbled slowly to the shore. I did not press him. Poor fellow! I felt too much for him for that. Notwithstanding my "successful skill," I was far enough from regarding him with "apathy." My great anxiety was to end his woes. I watched him to the shore, and then saw him wade out upon a rock surrounded by water. Keeping out of his sight, I stalked him from behind a heathery bank, which ran parallel to the shore, till I got within thirty yards. When I peeped cautiously through the heather, he was standing with his side to me, and his head sunk down nearly to the rock, the very picture of meek despair! Resting my elbow upon the heather, to make sure, I aimed at his heart. He gave one brave bound from his rock to the shore, staggered, and fell dead upon the beach.

There were soon plenty of hands examining his wounds. We found the first ball had grazed his neck, although I fancied I had missed him altogether. It was a wonder to all of us how the second had not finished him, so fair was he struck. The third passed through his heart.

It was now agreed that we should separate, for a thorough search after the wounded goat. It proved unsuccessful, although we were assisted by half-a-dozen pair of active limbs and sharp eyes—the general birthright of Highlanders. The shades of evening drew on, and we were obliged to take to our boat.

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What motive was it that made me decline a shooting party next morning, and determine upon a second excursion to the Lone Isle? After the narrative of the preceding day, I have little right to expect belief, when I say it was compassion. I could not help thinking that the poor goat *might* be alive; and, if so, nothing awaited him but a lingering death of pain. Having quickly finished my breakfast, I was soon seated at the oar, with a sturdy partner, and pulling rapidly for the quiet strand.

The people of the island had been on the outlook; and about two hours before we came, had seen him slowly limping up a hill. With my attendant behind me, I immediately walked off in the direction they pointed out. I had not long to look. Upon the pinnacle of the hill, which commanded a view all round, sat the poor goat, evidently in dread of a surprise like yesterday's. There was no possibility of stalking him; and the moment he saw me, he rose leisurely to his feet, and descended the hill on the other side. He then sauntered to the rocks on the shore, being quite unable for the steeps of Crap-na-Gower. We followed to the beach; but, upon getting there, he had hidden again.

After a search of many hours, my follower *winded* him. Upon looking cautiously all round, he detected him completely engulfed in heather, with rocks on each side, and only a small aperture by which he had entered this snug shelter. He had an instinctive knowledge the moment he was discovered; for he immediately rose and limped out of his retreat. The man hallooed to me, and I took my station upon a rock which commanded two passes, one of which he must cross, as he was unable to climb the high rocks. When he was within forty yards, I shouted to make him turn off the shore, and thus present a broadside. He only looked up languidly, and kept his course along the beach. He passed directly under me, at the distance of twenty yards, when I fired at the back of his neck, and hit him in the spine: of course his death was instantaneous.

Our boat was at the other side of the island, and we had no time to bring it round; so we could only leave him where he fell, and send early next morning to fetch him home. A light cobble and couple of gillies were alongside of him by five o'clock; but, even before that early hour, Rob Roy's "bedrels, the corbies, and the hoody craws," had entered upon office. I made them welcome to their share, but preserved his head, horns, and skin, together with that of his chief, which are as handsome trophies of the chase as any I have in my collection.

SALMON-ANGLING

I SHALL hope to be pardoned if I claim for fishing the appellation of a science. I have never considered it, like shooting, a mere art. At all events, it has certainly not yet been brought to perfection; and the more able the angler, the more willingly will he admit, that not a season passes without his acquiring fresh secrets which he is not over-solicitous to tell. If a man fancies he can jump into proficiency after a season or two's practice, he is vastly mistaken; it is not a few fishing excursions now and then that form the adept, but the heedful experience of years. Take an instance; and suppose a man to be expert in the knack of throwing a line;—he is angling down a fine salmon-stream, followed by a finished master of the fly, and has just completed his last throw of a promising pool. Upon looking over his shoulder, his companion has hold of a good fish, at the very part of the cast on which he had bestowed the most care and pains: he immediately suspects that his comrade has been more knowing in the choice of a fly. But when the salmon is landed, he discovers, to his amazement, that it was attracted by a facsimile of the identical fly which a moment before he had so dexterously tendered to its acceptance! Every really first-rate fly-fisher will meet with such occurrences, when angling in the wake of a less gifted craftsman. And although to the looker-on it appears as if he had charmed the fish, yet it is only by a more scientific knowledge of the *exact* spots where the salmon are likely to come up, and *lingering* over these with the motion of a glancing insect. This mastery of the gentle craft can only be attained by long practice and the most perfect command of the rod.

Angling for salmon may be called the deer-stalking of the streams. As in the first sight of the herd there is more excitement, and more satisfaction when you bring down the stag than any other game, so in salmon-fishing, compared with all other kinds, the interest is greater when you rise a fish, and the satisfaction double when you lay him on the shingly bank. Like deer-stalking, however, it has its disadvantages; not the least of which is, the greater stock of patience required, and the greater uncertainty of the sport; unless, indeed, in preserved waters, where there is much less opportunity of displaying the superiority of an accomplished fisher over the ordinary performer. In unprotected water, for instance, should the weather be unpropitious, the best rod may flog the river for hours without stirring a fin; while a couple of fish is always reckoned a good day's work. Under the same untoward circumstances, the trout-fisher may often, by skill and perseverance, make out a very tolerable bagful.

I have heard it said by some pseudo salmon-anglers, that the only pleasure was the hooking of the fish; and some have even declared they would not mind breaking every salmon directly after fastening him. Such men, to be consistent, should drop the salmon and stick to the trout: they will of course have more rises, and fix more fish; but the idea is absurd. If they have arrived at such a pinnacle of perfection, why not reduce their tackle to a single horse-hair? And if even this should be too strong for their exquisite skill, let them carefully cull the softest hair from the softest lock of their own softer heads.

However one may admire the dexterity of a master of the rod, as he casts his line between every opening among the trees, in a difficult river, yet I would rather see him manage his fish after hooking it; the cool nerve and delicate touch is the very perfection of art: and I should never pronounce a man a true salmon-fisher until I had seen him working one in a difficult situation. To throw a very long line, and to search the casts properly with the fly, are no doubt indispensable requisites; but a river fly-angler, (for I don't here speak of either bait or loch fishing,) who can work his hooked fish scientifically, will seldom be deficient in all the prerequisites of fixing him; while the *rising* man, who has only fished preserved waters, where all is clear and open, should he hook a salmon in a difficult place, will most likely find that he has got hold of too strong a customer. And here we may ask, what was the magic in angling that captivated the intellect of such men as Chantrey and Davy? Sir Humphry, I suspect, would have looked rather queer if an officious friend had told him that all the sport was over when the forty-pound fish he landed above Yair Bridge was first hooked. And the great sculptor would have been equally astonished if the struggles of a sixteen-pound Thames trout had been treated with the like contempt! Whatever may be the reason, all true anglers know that the doubtful contest with a monster-fish forms no inconsiderable part of the enjoyment; and his being laid upon the shelving bank the crowning point of all. No doubt the philosophy or the poetry of angling was one reason of its being the pastime of so many great minds; but when even contemplative Wotton had fairly landed a gorgeous fish, I will venture to say that the triumph of success swallowed up every other pleasure.

But, without analysing their feelings, we know not how much we owe to this recreation of departed genius. Might not the safety-lamp have been lit amid the limpid waters of the Tweed, and some of the most beautiful creations of Chantrey's fancy been first conceived on the green banks of Father Thames? Great men, however, can sometimes be great boys at the water-side. I have witnessed, with some amusement, the late Sir Charles Bell's comical vexation, when an unlooked-for rod bore down upon him. His testy frown, when interfered with, was quite irresistible—proof enough of his eagerness in the sport. But perhaps this unbending of the bow may have given it double power when strung again. Sir Charles was only a second-rate fisher, and it often seemed curious to me that he, and several men of the brightest intellect whom I have watched at the river-side, seemed more ignorant of their favourite amusement than of any other thing. I should not have wondered at any want of practical skill, so much as their ignorance of the habits of fish; in which department they seemed scarcely to excel the herd-laddie, who stared at them with vacant gaze.

Every newly arrived salmon-fisher should secure the services of the ablest native practitioner who may proffer them, and will thus be shown all the best casts of the river. It is absurd vanity to suppose oneself capable of discovering them without a great waste of time. No doubt a good salmon-angler will at once perceive the places where fish are most likely to harbour; but the misfortune is, that those casts which *appear* the most certain may sometimes deceive, while there are particular nooks, perhaps the least attractive even to an experienced eye, where a fish is pretty likely to rise; this is especially the case when the river is swollen. An angler must have but a poor knowledge of his craft, who, after once or twice fishing down a stream under proper guidance, could not afterwards manage for himself. It will be very necessary to get a list of the most killing flies in use, on the spot, and tie them of various shades and sizes.

After being thoroughly shown the casts of the river when swollen, it may be as well to have recourse to the guide again, when it becomes small and clear; as some pools that are excellent in flood, are not worth a throw when the water has fallen in, and others that were too foaming and boiling when the river was large, then come into prime order. The resorts of salmon, however, are much more easily detected when the river is low. This state of the water also requires considerable difference in the fly, chiefly in size. In my opinion, most salmon-fishers use too large hooks.

A stranger will often find his guide's knowledge superior to his practice; and that is the reason why the lower orders frequently excel those who might appear to a spectator to throw a better and finer line. Some anglers have an additional piece to screw on to their rods for long casts; a very thin butt is required when this piece is not added, and it is more apt to twist the rod. If equal in other respects, a man who has the power of throwing a very long line has the same advantage over a less gifted friend, in this particular, that a far-killing gun has over an inferior one, both in the same skilful hands. I should, therefore, advise every aspirant to excellence in salmon-fishing to attain this knack in the greatest possible perfection.

Some anglers who throw the longest line make it swirl out upon the water, the hook appearing to alight last. Others cause the fly to hover for a moment, and touch the water before any part of the line. These last appear the neater fishers, but the others command more water. In fishing a salmon-cast, throw a point down stream, bringing your hook gradually round by short jerks, but always keep it two points against the stream, and never bring it in so straight towards you as in trout-fishing. In dead water, when a very long cast, you may throw straight out, bringing your fly round, by keeping the point of the rod up instead of down stream. There is an under-handed throw much in use on the Spey, which prevents the line from circling behind. Of course this is a great advantage among trees or other obstacles. It is generally practised up stream, and the line with its *swish* upon the water goes over all the fish before they see the fly, which appears to me a great objection. These Spey-fishers can throw this under-handed cast as far as an expert hand in the ordinary way. A peculiar rod is necessary, which must be very stiff. Indeed, a common salmon-rod would be apt to break in the hands of these fishers. The cast is easily learned, and must be seen to be thoroughly understood.

Large rivers require a large rather than a gaudy fly, which must decrease in size as the river narrows. Rapid brawling streams, on the contrary, take a gaudy fly rather than a large one. There are many Highland burns where salmon and sea-trout ascend in numbers in the autumn. These being generally shallow and rapid, a large fly would frighten as many as it would attract. If you fish with a small hook of sober colour in such troubled water, it might not catch their sight. Streams of this kind are in best order when tumbling over stock and stone something the colour of London porter. The reason that a large fly of sombre hue is preferred for a stately river, arises from the depth and clearness of the water. A large fly is required to catch attention of fish at the bottom, while gay colours would be apt to alarm them as they come up, when the water is so clear. When a large river is also rapid, as in the higher parts of the Tay, the fly may be proportionably bright. The size of the stream is an excellent criterion for that of the hook; and you may see every village urchin fishing for the spring trout in Tweed with a hook double the size of that he uses in Gala, or any of the other tributaries, for the very same purpose: the favourite fly in both cases being a woodcock-wing, hare's-ear body, tied with blue thread.

The *regular* fishermen, as they call themselves, of any particular river, will hold up the flies they are accustomed to use, and affirm that they will kill in any water. These men have, of course, a great advantage over occasional visitors, both from their knowledge of the flies and places where the fish lie; gentlemen are therefore apt to overrate their pretensions, and pay compliments which they suck down as eagerly as (by their own account) the salmon do their flies. But take both to a strange river and leave them to their unaided resources, and, if equal in other respects, the advantage ought to be on the side of the amateur; because, from the variety of rivers in his fishing tours, he gains twice the insight into the habits of fish; although he may not appear to the same advantage with a far inferior fisher, when the latter is upon his own regular beat. Nevertheless, I must say that most gentlemen are so careless of everything but throwing the line, that the advantage gained by their more extensive means of observation is more than counterbalanced by the reflection of the lower orders, who put all their head-piece into their practice.

In the deep rocky parts of the river, especially at the beginning of the season, put on your largest fly, trying a smaller should you not get a rise. In the rapid Highland streams, where I have said before a small fly should be used, if you need any alteration, let it be in colour rather than in size. But on this point, as no invariable rule can be given, it will be better to get advice on the spot, if you can obtain it. For instance, though the Thames is so sluggish, and the trout so wary, the most killing fly there is what they call "the soldier-palmer," that is, a bright-dyed hackle, red pig's wool, and gold tinsel.

When fishing for salmon only, never have two flies on your cast. The pleasure of hooking more fish will not make up for the vexation of losing one, even should more be secured in the long run. This, however, must be a matter of taste. By changing the fly judiciously, you have nearly as good a chance with one as with two, although sometimes the fish may be a little longer in stirring. Don't be *too* certain that you have detected the most killing fly because fish take it well one day, as salmon, in some moods, will rise at anything you throw over them.

When large rivers are so low that the salmon reject the smallest legitimate fly, reduce your hook to the size of those recommended for the Highland streams—viz., what is called a sea-trout fly, and try before the sun is up, and after it sets. It is needless to say that this fly must be of a very sober cast. With these reduced flies, and no glaring sunshine on the water, a fish may now and then be taken in the pools, when there would have been no chance with the smallest salmon-hook. An excellent fly for some light summer waters is a ptarmigan wing, dull yellow, or dark green body, and a hackle half black and half red. This is first-rate for large sea-trout. In the Echaig, a blue jay-wing is a standing favourite, both with salmon and sea-trout, in every state of the river; and even in full flood they refuse a lighter wing. A dark mottled pheasant tail for wing, red body, and gold tinsel, is also a choice fly for the grilse and salmon of that water.

The salmon almost always keep the channel* or deep parts of a river; so, if it is fordable, you will often have to change from one side to the other, as the heaviest stream alters its course. In small waters this is not difficult, but in great rivers one is frequently obliged to make choice of a side. This requires judgment, as much of the day's sport depends on securing that one which combined circumstances render the most desirable at the time.

Trolling with par is a most deadly method, the bait being so gaudy, but it is ruinous to fly-fishing. If a par has been trailed over a salmon, there is little chance of its rising to the fly for some time, perhaps not even for that day. The Scotch peasantry have invented a substitute for the Thames trolling-rod. I had one made by a country joiner, although without *joins*, which cast even the fly nearly as well as my best salmon-rod; but the point being stiff, it was better adapted for par or minnow. By unwinding the length of line you wish to throw from the reel, and then pulling it through the large rings, until only a few yards hang down with the appended bait, you can jerk it out something after the manner of an English troller, with this difference, that the cast is made over the right or left shoulder. Some prefer a supple top, which entices the fish from its lively spinning, but is more apt to miss them. After all, it is but a sorry shift for the beautiful smooth underhanded casts of the Thames anglers. Even a moderate performer with a London trolling-rod, would excel the most skilful Highland par or minnow-fisher. There is also this great advantage on the side of the southern rod, that it injures the bait far less. But indeed the English manner of baiting, and whole arrangement of trolling-tackle, is very far superior to ours. I have fished with Thames trollers who were so particular as to bait differently with a bleak from a gudgeon.* A bleak is best on a dark windy day, from being showy—a gudgeon on a calm bright day, as its dark colour conceals and confounds the hooks. By the same rule, a loach is good in our lochs in clear weather. Bleak, however, are thought the best spinning bait on the Thames, unless at very rapid mill-dams, where the tougher gudgeon is not so apt to spoil.

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* This rule does not hold good with trout. Often the weather-side of a stream, even when shallow, is the surest find for them, because the flies and other insects, being drifted across, are collected on the opposite bank. In *lochs,* they would be devoured almost as soon as their voyage had begun; therefore the contrary rule obtains.

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* A bleak, with three rows of three hooks, tied back to back, and a single hook the reverse way, to separate the lowest row from the one above: and one top hook through the lips of the bait. A gudgeon, two rows of three hooks, one of two, and a single hook for the lips. It is of no use to describe the process of baiting, as every man must take a practical lesson from a good troller, before he can make any hand of it.

Young herring, from their shining scales, are found to be a most enticing bait for salmon. I have often tried them with success, especially in the lochs. Of course they must be used salt. The great objection to using them in the river is, that they are so very tender.

Should the water be confined, and the streams narrow and rapid, every inch may be searched by standing at the pool-head, and letting out line by yard-lengths, shifting the bait alternately from one side to the other until all the reel be nearly expended. Unless the river is flooded, very little lead is required. Pull your line, instead of winding it, slowly back again, searching as before, and when satisfied, wind up and proceed to another pool. When the river is broad, and you require to throw, you can make very far casts, as the par is tough and not easily spoiled. Swing it gently back as far as you can, and then bring it forward in the same way. I have seen a man with only one arm, a perfect master of this kind of throwing—so much does it depend upon a little knack. Some will say that very rapid spinning is not good. But I have always found, both in boat and river trolling, whether with minnow or par, that the more rapid and true the spinning, the greater my chance of stirring the fish. When trolling for salmon or large shy trout, I therefore adopt the mode of the Thames fishermen, on account of the superiority of the spinning, as well as the lesser risk of missing the fish.

When the diminishing water prevents the salmon from rising at the par, you may still succeed with minnow, in the streams, especially about dusk. Very large trout, also, that scarcely ever rise to a fly, dash freely after the minnow when the sun is down. They may also take it in the daytime, if the water should be a little swollen and the sky cloudy. But the river salmon-fisher is more indebted to bait than either par or minnow; and for this reason, that salmon will take a worm when the river is so low that they refuse all other kinds of prey. In river-angling a large hook should be used, and a mixture of dew-worms and the small red, or the brandling if it can be procured. The bait should be massy, nearly as thick as your little finger. This is accomplished by pushing up all the odds and ends of the worms you put on, along the shank of the hook and the gut, more or less, according to the angler's fancy. In rapid running water, a good lump of bait is more easily seen from a distance, and if a fresh worm be put on the point of the hook, the imposture cannot well be detected in the moving stream. Lead the line to reach within a yard or so of the bottom, and search every inch of pool and stream, noticing the slightest tug. When you perceive the least straightening of the line, always go over the same inch until you either fix the fish, or disgust him. Never be in a hurry with a large fish: give him time if possible to gorge. A good hold is half the battle with a good salmon, as, in a long-continued struggle, an indifferent one is apt to wear and give way, often at the few last faint efforts to spurn the shore.

Behind large stones and in eddies there is always a good cast for worm; and in searching the latter you cannot be too particular. Try every variety of depth and current; in fact, seem to humour the line, though dexterously guiding it. No greater test of a practical bait-fisher than this.

I always like to have some bait in my pocket, even on the most propitious day for the fly; and the following successful results of the practice occurred the summer before last. There are four pools at the top of the Echaig, a little separated from the other casts. As the season advances, the large fish are very apt to remain in them. My custom was generally to begin at the lowest of these pools, fish up with fly to the top, and, if unsuccessful, to put on bait, and rake them down again. In the autumn of 1847, I rose a salmon in the bottom pool, at the first throw, gave him a rest, and rose him again. Another ten minutes' rest, while I put on a smaller fly. He rose a third time; but not wishing to disgust him, I passed on to the pool above. A second salmon rose near the tail of the pool. But, although I gave him the customary law, and also changed my flies, he was stubborn. I therefore walked off to the two top pools, but no fish moved in them either at fly or bait. I returned to my first salmon —up he came again, keen as ever. I left him once more for his neighbour in the pool above, but his mood was still unchanged. I therefore put on bait, when he dashed at it like a bull-dog. In about twenty minutes I had him extended on the gray shingle, half on land, half in water, when his hold broke. I rushed down, but had the mortification to see him waddle into the deeps again. With my crest a little lowered, I descended to my quondam friend in the first pool; a fifth time he rose fiercely. I therefore waited the usual time, and he rose again. Upon the seventh trial, however, he refused; so I gave him the same lure which had nearly proved fatal to the other. Instantly he was at it and fast. But a more cross-grained "sea-king" I never contended with. It was about twelve o'clock when I hooked him. At one, he was fresh as a laverock. About forty yards below, a tree that jutted over a deep part of the river prevented my leading him down stream, so he had every advantage, and I must say seemed inclined to take it. Sometimes he would sulk, and when with great trouble I shook him off the bottom, he would rush up or down the pool, terminating his vagaries by a fair somerset. Half-past two o'clock, and my arm quite tired. I looked often to the road for assistance, but no one appeared. A little before three, I saw a car, and hailed the driver, who good-naturedly left his vehicle, and to my question if he could gaff a fish, replied that "he wasna gude wi' the flee, but gie him a stroke at the sawmont wi' the clip, and he wadna seek anither." I gave him my gaff, and began to strain and shake the salmon, if possible to bring him within the reach of my self-confident ally. At last I brought him with some difficulty near the fatal weapon. The "stroke" was given, but it was too plain the "sawmont" would require if he did not "*seek* anither!" The man had scraped him, and thus rendered him desperate. Down he pushed, past the tree. It was not of so much consequence now, for I gave my rod to the driver for a moment, (who handled it exactly like his whip,) got round the tree, and was all right. Having the command of the stream, I soon brought the fish under the bank, when the man gaffed him cleverly. Although so game, he was only ten pounds weight; and had I not been hampered with the tree, I should have managed him in half an hour. I anticipate the remark, "A bad day for the fly is often a good one for the worm." This maxim was not applicable in the present case; for with one of the flies, several times refused by the salmon, I hooked and landed a three-pound sea-trout, in the next pool I fished. No sooner had I dropped it into my bag, than a five-pound grilse sucked down the same fly as eagerly as the trout did, and shared the same fate. I had no more time to spare, but, if I could have remained, I should probably have had prime sport with the fly, as I left a beautiful reach of the river untried.

About a fortnight after, the water was again in excellent trim for the fly, and I alongside of the pool I considered surest for a heavy fish. After twice going carefully over it with the most approved flies, and not even a break, feeling almost certain that a salmon lodged there, I again had recourse to the worm. At the very foot of the pool, where it joined the shallow, my bait stopped, and the peculiar twitching of the line made good my prognostic. Allowing him time to gorge, I struck, and had hold of a noble fellow. After a good struggle, I landed the largest fish I ever secured in the Echaig, fifteen pounds and a half when I brought him home. This day, however, neither salmon nor sea-trout would look at a fly.

A raw salmon-fisher is seldom aware what sized fish has risen. It often appears much smaller than it actually is, from the fore-shortening caused by the salmon coming straight up, seizing the fly, then descending head foremost; which last motion generally gives a glimpse of its tail. Instead of this, if the fish should flounder its whole body out of water in coming at the fly, the effect is very imposing, and even a six-pounder will appear to the novice a perfect monster.

When hooked fish splash on the top of the water, take great care, or you may break their hold by too tight a strain. The opposite extreme is equally dangerous, as they may then shake the hook out of their mouth. It is the nicety of art to let them get down without falling into either error. Should the river be small, of course most of the heavy fish will be collected in the deepest pools. Pay most attention to them. When stones and rocks are easily seen at the bottom, there is a clearness either in the air or water that hinders fish from stirring freely; you have then, perhaps, a better chance with worm than anything else. Also, when leaves and other rubbish come floating down, they frighten fish, and prevent their seeing the fly. The nearer the bottom you angle, of course these impediments are less in the way. They are most troublesome on a windy day. When foam is thick upon the water, fish rise badly to fly. A succession of floods, or, as we call them, "spates," will gorge the fish, and make them shy, especially of taking bait. In landing a salmon or any heavy fish in a river, if possible get below him. You are thus favoured by the stream. Whereas, by standing above, you hang the fish's weight against the current, and are more apt to strain and break its hold.

I shall here add an instance or two of the fastidiousness of salmon at one time, and their voracity at another; by which it will be evident that there are days when a very bungler may capture them, and others when all our skill is well needed. In summer, when the Teith was rather dwindled, a Highlander rose a grilse with a small sea-trout fly. He, of course, gave him a rest, and tried him with a larger, to no effect; went back to the small one, and again rose him. He then put on, in succession, a worm, a par, and a minnow, without getting a tug; and, as a last resource, cut off the par's tail,* when the fish came up greedily and fastened. He would never have wasted so much time had he not known that, from the low state of the river, there was little chance of another rise all day. On the other hand, a shepherd lad was looking dreamily over the Brig of Turk, upon the large deep hole below, overhanging which the martins had formed a colony in the sand-bank, when one of the young martins fell out of the nest into the river, and was immediately gulped down by a large salmon. The shepherd procured a bait-hook, and the coarsest tackle, took another young bird out of the nest, and baited; the fish at once came up again, was hooked, and landed.

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* The par tail is an excellent substitute for the minnow, and in some moods of the water is to be preferred. It is easy to bait with, and bears very rough usage on the hooks. The head and shoulders are cut off in a slanting way, and you bait in the same manner as with the minnow or par.

Salmon are certainly far scarcer now than formerly, and the average weight of those taken is much decreased. Sixteen-pound fish are now as rare as twenty-pounders used to be a few years ago. Many reasons are suggested for this falling off, but the most rational I have heard is the dexterity of the sea-netters close to the mouths of all our good salmon rivers and streams, and latterly the rage for thorough-draining, which makes the rise and fall of the rivers both sudden and extreme. In consequence, the winter spawning-beds are often left so shallow as to be chilled and rotted by frost.

The following make-shift is inserted for the benefit of the luckless wight who may have the misfortune to break the top of his rod at the water-side, and neglected to bring a spare one. On the morning of my last day's fishing of the Echaig, I hooked a four-pound sea-trout on my bob, and when the fish was quite spent, the trail-fly fastened on a rotten stump. I waded in to try to disengage it, and, in so doing, carelessly strained back my rod over my right shoulder. The fish gave a languid plunge, and, of course, broke the top. Although I had only some thread, and a pair of scissors, I cut a couple of twigs, and spliced my rod, as clumsily as ever a country surgeon bungled a poor man's leg. With my maimed instrument I killed two fine salmon and several sea-trout. I had fished since July, and bagged two hundred and fifty-seven sea-trout, many very large, and twelve salmon and grilse, with the same top, and little expected to break it the last day, when I was particularly anxious to do great things. A few years ago, the same mishap befel me when fishing in Loch Dronkie. At the beginning of the day, a large yellow trout rose, and was fixed, just under a perpendicular bank. Not being able to land the fish without throwing back my rod too far, I snapped the top, though I secured my prey. Nothing daunted, I mended my rod with a bit of twine, and killed five more fine trout. I question if, either day, I should have had better sport had no accident occurred.

TROLLING FOR THE SALMO-FEROX

"IT'S A FAR CRY TO LOCH OW!"

TROLLING for giant trout is the very acme of rod-fishing. It is generally thought that the whole of this exciting sport consists in fixing good baits upon the trolling-rod, letting out a sufficiency of line, and mainly relying upon the boatman's skill to point out the best fishing-ground. Although trolling after this fashion may occasionally be successful, yet the reverse is far oftener experienced, when all the blame is sure to be laid on the weather, as the best ground has been carefully searched, and the baits were excellent. Few gentlemen are aware how easily this best ground may be changed to a good distance on either side, by a bright sun, a breeze of wind, or a rise of the loch after rain. This is invariably the case where the shores are level, and the depth consequently gradual. Should the sky be dark and the loch discoloured, or, on the contrary, small and clear, with a cloudless sky, a difference in the size and colour of the bait, and rapidity in spinning it, may bring home an empty boat, or reward us with a couple of trout, that will give the boatman as much trouble to carry as two buckets of water.

There are three kinds of trout that peculiarly belong to this description of fishing. And, first, the great salmo-ferox, from its size, strength, and cunning, deserves the highest place. Next, the gillaroo, (pronounced "ghirroo" by the Highlanders,) which, although not nearly so shy, nor of such giant proportions as the other, yet has been frequently taken from sixteen to eighteen pounds. (I have never fished much for them myself, and the largest I have caught was five pounds weight. I hooked him with minnow near the foot of Loch Lubnaig, as I rowed home after fly-fishing the green sunk banks at the top. He was in excellent condition, but in fight and appearance strongly reminded me of a barbel.) And, lastly, the famous trout of the Thames. It seldom attains the dimensions even of our gillaroo; but merits place among the first triumvirate, both from its beauty and the skill required to hook it.

In trolling for any of these fish, especially the salmo-ferox, great attention should be paid to the tackle, not only that it is all of the very best quality, but also that it is dressed in a manner least apt to miss the trout. Of course the angler must not expect many runs in a day, which makes it particularly vexatious when the fish that *do* dash at the bait escape the hooks. In boat-trolling for smaller trout, I often use but two hooks—a large one through the tail of the bait, and a smaller through its mouth. This has many advantages; you bait quickly and easily, the appearance of the minnow is not spoiled, and when the trout are at all greedy, they don't often miss. There is this to be said against it, however, that when shy fish bite warily, they may sometimes seize the bait by the middle, and, for want of middle hooks, blow it away again, when slightly pricked by the others. The spinning also is neither so quick nor so true as by the following method, which I have tried with great success. It is, first a single hook, next three tied back to back, then another single one tied the contrary way, ending with a second trio. Of course, when trolling for the feroxes, all the hooks must be very large. This latter plan, when properly baited, moves very naturally; and, although there are so many hooks, I am convinced, *from the rapidity of the spinning*, they are even less perceptible than when there are few. One of the last hooks being inserted *at the side* of the bait's tail, the whole tail-fin catches the water better than by the other more simple method; and there are three hooks for the shoulder and three for the tail, the two places where the feroxes are most apt to strike. I am quite sure, after trying both ways, that this last plan not only misses fewer trout, but secures a greater number of runs. I should, therefore, strongly recommend it when large shy fish are the object, although not where trout are small and plentiful, especially in cold weather, when the difficulty of baiting is a serious objection.

When fairly afloat, beware of trusting too implicitly to your boatman, even should you be totally unacquainted with the loch. It commonly happens, unless he is a good practical fisher, that he will take you over the same ground under all circumstances; and should no fish run, lay the blame on something unpropitious in the day, which it may require some ingenuity on his part to discover, and some credulity on yours to believe. Your best plan with such a guide is to make him be most particular about the surest resorts of the large fish; and should you be unsuccessful the first time of going over them, try again a little nearer the shore, if there is much wind; or, if it be calm, a little further out, *especially when the loch is small.* Towards dusk you may generally keep nearer the shore, also when the loch has risen, or is discoloured with rain. You must not then sink the baits so deep, but raise them by taking off some of the sinking lead, not by winding up a part of the line, as the shallower you troll, the more need of a long line. It is always a good plan to have baits of different sizes; the larger upon the outside rod, which should have the longest line and heaviest lead. This rod should be fixed by the butt, at the opposite side of the boat, so as to cross before you. I need not say the reel and line must be quite free. Keep the other rod in hand, now and then sinking the point in the water as it grows deeper or the day calmer. Should the rod across the boat hook a fish, instantly throw the other to the boatman next you, who may wind it up out of your way, his comrade guiding the boat with both oars. If the fish is large, he will most likely strike away from the boat, and your first effort should be to shorten your line by backing water. Whenever the fish is under command of a short line, and you can persuade him to follow the boat, land and kill him from shore.

While sitting in the stern, be always on the look-out for weeds, and give the alarm. Your boatmen will immediately turn rapidly into the deep; and you, raising a rod in each hand, as high as possible, should make every effort to keep the baits near the surface. If this is done cleverly, it may prevent that major misery of boat-trolling, *a double fast.* If fortunate enough to get clear, it may be as well to examine the baits; indeed, this should be done at intervals throughout the day; as a small green weed attached to the bait will prevent it from spinning, or, at all events, act as a damper to the trout. Fish always for such shy customers with a very long line, especially if there is little wind to curl the water. Where the shores are level, the depth is generally gradual; therefore try the good places at various depths, as your own judgment may suggest. But should the rock or mountain rise abruptly from the margin, the water almost always deepens suddenly within a short distance of the shore. Once going over is quite enough if you keep between the shallow and the deep, which only occupies a few yards. When sky and water are dull, a large bright bait, such as a salmon-smelt, is very good; but, if the loch is clear and low, bait one rod with a par instead of a burn-trout, the ordinary bait.

Never find fault with your boatmen, when the hooks stick fast, for taking you into too shallow water. If you do, they will most likely prevent this annoyance, by keeping too deep for any fish to see your bait. Most fishing-guides are too apt, at any rate, to err this way, to save themselves trouble; as they dread a fast even more than the angler. The truth is, when trolling for the salmo-ferox, the baits should be hung only a few yards from the bottom. They must therefore frequently catch a weed, or root, or sunk rock. Be assured that the largest fish are generally taken by trolling close to the bottom, as they are lazy. In roughish weather row slowly, in order to give them a good opportunity of seeing and seizing the bait; quicker in a mild clear day, for it is then as well to give them little time to reflect. East and north are the worst winds for Loch Awe; west, south-west, and even north-west are very favourable. By adhering to these rules, a fair troller ought to take one or two large feroxes every good day.

In the year 1842 I had five days' trolling on Loch Awe, and, as I noted down each day's success, will here record it.

Head-quarters, Cladich, April 30th. Did not go out till five o'clock; a fine evening, but too calm. Trolled down three miles on the Cladich side of the Loch, returned over the same ground, a little nearer shore; not a tug until dusk, when we were within half a mile of the inn. I then hooked a fish: he was a dull wretch, and made indifferent play. Weight, eight pounds. When brought to table he cut up white, but was firm and good to eat. I have observed two kinds of the salmo-ferox—one, dark-skinned and white in the flesh; the other, pink in flesh, and of starry scales. The latter always makes the most spirited resistance. Perhaps it may be inferred that there is only one kind, and that the difference arises from their condition. This is not the case, however, as I have taken white-fleshed specimens in the finest possible order.

May 2. Started at seven for Castle Connal, about midway between Cladich and the ford at the foot of the loch. Castle Connal Bay a great resort for the heavy fish—killed a brace, one six pounds, the other two and a half. Trolled till six o'clock.

May 3. A close sultry wind; did not go to fish till after dinner, when it got brisker. Tried the islands and head of the loch; hooked a fine fish off Enish Isle; he made capital play for half an hour, when I stranded him upon the island. Weight, nine and a half pounds, in first-rate condition, and a beautiful fish. Had a look at the island, and a description of it from old Sandy. It is a fine green sheep-pasture, and often called the green isle, as well as Enish Isle, or Ellen's Island. Ellen was a daughter of Sir James M'Naughton, and was the first person buried in the island. She was drowned in the loch. The poor chief of Lochiel, who was stabbed with the penknife in Castle Connal, was also buried here. After having satisfied my craving for traditions, true or false, we re-entered the boat, and coasted Fruich-land, or the Heather Island. The Castle of Fruich-land is a picturesque ruin. Sir James M'Naughton was once governor of it, and, when Ben Cruachan was a deer-forest, Alexander the Third sojourned in the castle to enjoy forest sport. Its shore, however, afforded none to me. We now coasted the mainland, to the head of the loch, where I hooked a small fellow, only one pound and three quarters—came round the opposite side, and entered the estuary of the Awe, a fine black deep creek, but I never hooked a large fish in it. To-day we only got a small thing, rather more than a pound. To make up, Sandy was profuse in story. Pointing to the dark threatening mountain, with the white streak of the winter drift upon its summit, "It was on the side o' Ben Cruachan here, that the Irish chief, M'Faydon, was beat by Sir William Wallace, and chased into a cave yonder (showing a crag opposite.) Sir William fand him oot, however, an' stuck his head on a spear on the tap o' the craig, by order o' Sir Neil Campbell, Black Knight o' Loch Ow."

I was pondering over the rock, where the Irish chief's knowledge-box had, no doubt, afforded a resting-place for the sage owls of the neighbouring dells, when Sandy again called my attention to a brook, fringed with oak copse, which trickled over the heathery brow of Ben Cruachan. From his solemn air, I expected an improvement on the Black Knight's cruelty to poor M'Faydon. "Yon's an awfu' place for wild-cats. I heard them answering 'ither wi' sic screighs, ae nicht whan I passed late, I thoucht I wad hae been frichtened oot o' ma joodgment." "And what did you do, Sandy?" "I jist falded my arms across ma throat, an' ran past the burn as hard as I could split. Catch me gang past that place again after the gloamin'."

There is something very imposing in this outlet of the Awe: the rocks on each side so rugged and steep; the narrow deep water so dark from their shadow. If you drop a pebble into it, the sound is so vivid and hollow, you shudder at the distance it must sink before finding its bed. I rather think the sudden and great depth of the water is one reason why so few fish frequent this creek. We now emerged from the bay, and coasted the stony cheerful shore of New Inverawe. When skirting this shallow, and gliding slowly past the little isles which lie beyond, Sandy is always in expectation "o' a rug." He was not gratified by one to-day.

May 4. Up at four o'clock, intending to troll down to the Ford at the foot of the Loch, a distance of nineteen miles. It was a dead calm when we rowed off, but, from certain appearances in the sky the evening before, we were pretty sure of at least as much wind as we wanted before breakfast-time. So it proved. By ten o'clock we had a south-wester which effectually barred our progress farther down than Castle Connal. Put about, and drifted back with the wind, trolling the best bays and shores on each side of the loch. Hooked a very fine trout off a rocky point five miles below Port Sonachan. It was tenderly hooked, and slipped off, to our chagrin. Crossed to the Sonachan side, and hooked another with a salmon-smelt. Landed him, after a tough struggle of three quarters of an hour, on Bala-Menach shore; ten pounds, and in the finest condition. No more runs till we passed Cladich burn, and began to pull along the inhabited island. I then hooked a fish which soon came to the top of the water, and I saw he was a pike. Sandy assured me it was "ane o' thae *new* beasts that cam' doon the Urchay frae

Loch-Tulla, that my Lord Breadalbane pat in." We made small bones of him, as he was only four pounds weight. Got two more trout, rather above a pound, on our way home.

May 5. I had now only one more day to spare, and was disappointed at being unable to devote it to the west end of the loch, at "the foord," decidedly the best trolling ground for the large fish. It was a squally showery morning, so I waited to see if the afternoon would clear up. There was no change, but as the wind was westerly I ordered out the boat about four o'clock. Trolled down three miles, when I had "a rug." Landed the trout in a few minutes—only two pounds. Crossed over and searched the Inistrinich shore on our return. Unsuccessful, till we reached a very weedy creek nearly opposite Cladich, which Sandy was anxious to avoid. But to me it looked so tempting that I made him turn in, although he cast many a rueful look at his great enemies, the weeds. About half-way down the little bay, a strong lively fish seized the bait; we got clear of the confined water with some difficulty, landed, and played him from shore. Although he only weighed six pounds, I have seldom taken out a more high-mettled trout. The evening was bitterly cold, so we did not bait again, but pulled straight for the harbour of Cladich, and next day drove over the hill to Inverary for a short sojourn there. Caution:—Always weigh the large fish yourself, or see them weighed, when at a fishing inn, otherwise they will probably weigh two pounds heavier down stairs than up.

When the loch has been thoroughly flooded, wait till it falls in a little, as the large fish especially are glutted with food, and lazy, after continued wet weather. Upon the water diminishing and getting clear, they will become more alert than before the rain.

The best time of year for the salmo-ferox is the end of April, May, and the beginning of June. They are very dormant all July and August. Although much more shy than in spring, they sometimes take pretty fair in September. A small bait is generally most successful in this month. The large ones lie farther from the shore than earlier in the season. Many of the best worth hooking even haunt the middle of the loch at this time of year. I killed two last September (1850) *in midloch*, which weighed twelve and a half and twelve pounds. Some of the Loch Awe fishing-guides suggested to me, that the partiality of the feroxes for deep water then might be occasioned by the pike driving the small trout from the shallows, and that the feroxes followed the shoals into the deep to prey upon them. But if this is the reason, why don't they do so in May and June? In autumn a good fish is sometimes taken in the estuary of the Awe, called the "Brander," as they are making for the river to spawn. The Brander is generally blank at any other time.

MOUNTAIN TARNS

There are a number of little mountain tarns in the neighbourhood of Inverary, most of them well stocked.

A chain of lochans, about eight miles over the hills, is well worth the fly-fisher's attention. I climbed to them, one balmy day, with my fly-trouting rod, and a few casts round my hat. The scenery from the tops of the hills did not much hit my fancy, although the views of Loch Fine and the opposite glens no doubt are pleasing. It was a long dreary walk, with few objects of interest to shorten it, except the instinctive wiles of a moss-cheeper (meadow-pipit) and a sparrow-hawk to decoy me from their respective nests. The pipit really deceived me at first, so completely did it sham a broken leg and wing. As for the little hawk, although I marked the very spot she rose from, all my ingenuity could not discover her young. She flew about, appearing quite unconcerned so long as I kept near this place; but when I walked away, she always pitched down, making a great fuss, as much as to say, "Keep off my nest: here it is"—giving me a false direction as plainly as a bird could speak.

The first lochan of the chain, named Camisdown, lies much lower than the others, and is a good deal the largest. Some of the trout in it are eight or ten pounds' weight. I only got one rise, and secured a fish of about a pound. There are few days in the year that they rise well in this loch, and bait is more acceptable than fly. The other little tarns are upon the tops of the hills. Two of them contain no fish, and look as if they were dead, when contrasted with the others—all alive from the continual rising of trout. In a few hours I filled my creel, (a pretty large one), and might easily have stocked it again, as the day was good for the fly, and the fish keen.

A fisherman in the neighbourhood gave me a strange account of a moss-hole—for it deserves no more dignified name—which breeds trout of twelve pounds' weight. As the "weedy loch" was only half an hour's walk from Inverary, I took advantage of the first favourable day to give it a trial, both with fly and bait, for one of these monsters. I thought my guide was joking when he pointed to a shallow hole, no bigger than an English duck-pond, and so overgrown with water-plants that there were scarcely three square yards clear. After watching for a little time, a great break of the water, but slow and heavy, in the midst of the weeds, betokened the kind of customers I should have to deal with. The trolling-rod was quickly baited, but there was some difficulty to find opening enough for the hook to sink. After shifting several times, for the great bubbles at top of the water were still seen at distant intervals, I put on the most approved fly for the "weedy loch,"—viz., a red wing from the landrail's feather, (a partridge tail feather will do as well,) and a green body. It was the strangest fishing I ever attempted, to pitch the fly at every open space, however small, and twitch back again without playing it an inch. Even thus, you were almost sure of a weed at each endeavour. I did hook a fish, however, and, thanks to the goodness of my tackle, landed him in spite of them. It was the shortest, thickest, and most silvery yellow trout I ever brought to the bank of loch or river. Weight, two pounds and a half. Angus, my guide, told me that all the very large ones were caught with worm;

but a dull, windy, showery day was indispensable, so none would look at mine.

I gave them an hour's rest, and during this interval had an account of a Loch Fine herring-fisher's life, from Angus, a frank athletic young man, the skipper and part owner of a boat. The fleet of scows, which are always hauled up, high and dry, to refit after the season is over, were all launching at present, and Angus meant to set sail in ten days. When shooting their nets, they had their choice of the best herrings to eat; for when they sold them "by the dizen,* the warst made up the coont, and fetched the same price as the best." In the creeks and lochs where they anchored, they could always get milk from the shepherds' sheelings and bothies scattered along the banks, which milk from the little Highland cattle, grazed in the sheltered straths and glens, was "as rich as cream every drap o't." Some of the fishermen, he said, "*indulged in dirt;*" which luxury, however, he strictly prohibited in his boat.

It was now time to take to my rod again, and go over all the open places with the fly. Another trout actually rose and hooked at the same spot as the former one; but in straining to prevent his entanglement in the weeds, his hold broke. The "weedy loch" is a novelty to most anglers, and well worth a visit on that account.

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* Various sizes of herring frequent different lochs. They are called 'skulls;" and the Loch Fine skull is so much larger than the others that five hundred go to a cran, while seven hundred from Loch Long are required to make it.

GROUSE AND BLACK GAME SHOOTING

Grouse-shooting, when the season begins, and our moors are thronged by ardent sportsmen from all parts of the kingdom, although requiring some tact and skill, is mere child's play compared to what it becomes when the birds are wild and wary.

In the month of August or September, a few general rules may enable a good shot, upon a tolerable moor, to load his game-carrier. He should commence upon the farthest end of his range, giving his dogs the wind, and select some part of the moor, near the centre, to which he must endeavour to drive all his packs. His follower should be a good marker,* active and intelligent in comprehending his least signal, and always ready, when the dogs point, to place himself so as to prevent the birds taking a wrong direction. After having skirmished in this way until about two or three o'clock, he may send for a fresh couple of his oldest and most experienced dogs, and, with the greatest care, begin to beat this reserved ground. If the day is favourable, and he has not strangely mismanaged, he ought to make bloody work. Should his range be along the steep side of a mountain, the birds are much less likely to leave the ground; when raised, they will probably (unless he is beating up and down the hill, which is neither an easy nor good way) fly straight along the mountain-side, and the young grouse-shooter might suppose would drop down upon a line with the place they rose from. But no such thing: the pack, after getting out of sight, before lighting will take a turn, and fly a considerable way either to the right or left. The sportsman must judge by the wind,* nature of the ground, &c., which direction they have taken: if he can see the way their heads are turned just when going out of sight, he may also form a shrewd guess; but if he does not find them on the one side, he must try the other. Should he have the whole of a detached hill, even if a small range, the birds are so unwilling to leave it at the beginning of the season that they will often fly round and round until he has completely broken them: no finer opportunity than this for filling the bag. Early in the season, when an unbroken pack is found at evening feed, if the birds do not rise together, too much care cannot be taken to search the ground. They often wander a good way from each other, and after hearing a shot will lie till they are almost trod upon.

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* In marking grouse, when you can no longer distinguish them from the brown heather, still let your eye follow their course, as the flapping of their wings when they light is much longer discernible than the rapid motion of their flight.

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* If high, grouse are very apt to fly with it, unless they have some stronger motive to the contrary.

On some of our moors, grouse are as plentiful as partridges in the preserved turnip-fields of Norfolk: no man would then break his beat to follow a pack; but let him select the lowest and most likely ground, as near the centre of his range as possible, for his evening shooting. Grouse, and indeed all game, when raised, generally fly to lower ground, and when they begin to move about on the feed, are more easily found by the dogs; for which reason the evening is always the most successful time of the day.*

The experienced grouse-shooter well knows how little it will avail him to attempt to find out the best part of a moor with which he is unacquainted, by a distant *coup-d'œil*, or by theory, however plausible. On the same range the packs will be strongest and most numerous one year on the top of the hill, another on the brow, and a third on the flat at the foot, and this often without any assignable reason. A man who chooses his range by rule will be as likely to fix on the worst as the best. The only plan, supposing he has neglected to make himself acquainted with the ground before the 12th of August, is to find out from the shepherds where the packs are most plentiful, and concert measures accordingly. It often happens that, if the hatching-time is very rainy, the best packs may be found on the brow of a hill, from being less exposed to the wet; and in a dry sultry season the best places to range are the flats between the hills, or even the tops, if dotted with "peat-hags."* The very reverse, however, may be the case if there are few mossy springs or "peat-hags" on the flat or top, and if the hill-side is supplied with water for the young packs by a constant succession of little brooks. It is impossible for a stranger to find out these *minutiæ* without question-

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* Should the sportsman knock down an old cock and hen, and afterwards have the mortification to see the "squeaking" pack rise all round him, my advice is *not* to massacre them from the idea that, if left alone, they must *necessarily* die a more cruel death. I know most keepers will say that the young birds would starve, and I *was* of the same opinion; but I began to doubt the truth of it some time since, and a few years ago had an opportunity of proving its fallacy. On a part of my moor where the birds were very scarce, I got a point, and after killing a brace was proceeding to pick them up, when the young pack rose, five in number, as decided "squeakers" as ever struck remorse into the callous heart of the shooter. I at once determined to ascertain whether poults left in so unprotected a state *must* die. So, after ranging the ground most carefully for a considerable distance, to be certain there was no other pack

near, I left them undisturbed for eight days. At the end of that time I found and shot two of them, not at all fallen off in condition, and quite large enough to count in the day's return of the slain. These poults were not in company, but at a little distance from each other. It therefore appears to me that their great danger is from vermin, missing the warning cry of the old birds when an enemy approaches. There can be no doubt of its being both cruel and destructive to the young brood to murder their protectors; but should the sportsman unfortunately do so, and not discover his mistake till too late, he had better give them the chance of escaping vermin than shoot them *out of humanity*, erroneously supposing that they cannot but die of starvation.

* Places where peats have been "cast" or dug out, in which the moss water collects, and affords drink to the grouse. Sometimes these "hags"

ing those who are in the habit of travelling the hill, and who will be just as likely to know *what is of more consequence*—viz., where the packs are to be found in the greatest abundance.

As to the ground *immediately* round him, a man accustomed to the moors can always tell whether it is likely to harbour game; and let him be ranging the top, the ridge, the brow, or the flat at the foot of the hill, if he is surrounded by alternate patches of old and young heather, interspersed with numerous green mossy springs, or peat-hags half filled with water, he is in full expectation of a point. If, on the contrary, the ground is bare and the heather burnt, or if it be growing in one unvarying crop of rank luxuriance, he looks anxiously for a break, and almost grudges the unflagging exertions of his persevering dogs. Still he never gives up hope, and often finds game where he least expects it.

When grouse are raised on the top or brow of a hill, the flight is generally much shorter than when found on a level at the foot. In the latter case, they generally fly far out of sight; but if the ground is hilly and uneven, they often take a few dodging turns, and drop down at no great distance. On the steep peak of the heathery hill, I have seen them fly quite round, and again settle not far from where they were first discovered. In fine weather, before

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are formed by natural rifts in the bog, with a small red brook running through. This water is very unwholesome, and a man had better bear his thirst than drink it. The peat-stack is a sure index of these supplies of water, and can be seen at a considerable distance.

the packs are strong, and especially before they have been much shot at, their flights are usually not nearly so long as they are afterwards; but even then, should the day be windy, they are generally rapid and uncertain. When this is unfortunately the case, they are so capricious in the choice of their refuge as often to baffle the most determined tramper of the moors.

Grouse are much more difficult to find in the middle of the day than in the morning and evening, when they move more about; but in sultry weather they lie quite still, except at feeding-time; and not having stirred perhaps for hours, the dogs may come within a yard or two before winding them. To procure shots at such times tries the mettle both of the sportsman and his dogs. During continued rain, they are apt to gather beneath the shade of a hillock, or in scaurs and ravines. To continue ranging is mere waste of time, until it clears, and the ground has dried a little; for, to say nothing of the other miseries, the birds, even when found, will not run a yard in the wet heather, and generally take wing at a long distance. When the weather is boisterous, they are very fidgety and wild, even at the beginning of the season. It is then easy to see who does and who does not understand anything of grouse-shooting. Every inequality of ground must be taken advantage of. The sportsman should crouch as much as he can, wearing a drab-coloured cap, which will often take him five or six yards nearer his game than the lowest-crowned hat he can procure. If possible, he should always advance from lower ground, walking up any cracks or hollows in the moss. When this is skilfully done, he appears to the birds at a greater distance than when they see his whole figure prominently coming down upon them from higher ground. I have already said, that if you have reason to suppose the pack are on the side, or at the foot of a steep hillock, *only a gunshot in height*, the best plan to pop upon them within reach is to come straight over the top; but under other circumstances, this should never be attempted.

Most young shots are not content unless they are upon the moor by peep of day on the long-anticipated 12th of August. And what is the result? They have found and disturbed most of the packs before they have well fed, and one half will rise out of distance, and fly away unbroken. Had the moor been left quiet till eight or nine o'clock, fair double shots might have been obtained at almost every pack, and many would have been scattered for the evening shooting. It will generally be found that if two equal shots, upon equal moors, uncouple their dogs, one at five o'clock and the other at eight, and compare notes at two in the afternoon, the lazy man will have the heaviest game-bag, and his ground will be in the best order for the deadly time of the day, to say nothing of his competitor's disadvantage from having fruitlessly wasted his own strength and that of his dogs, when many of the packs would not allow him to come within reach. My advice, therefore, to the young grouse-shooter, is always to wait till the dew is dry on the heather. If he starts at eight o'clock, and travels the moors as he ought, there is time enough before dark to put his powers to the proof, however he may pique himself upon them. I do not mean to say he must run over the ground, but keep up a steady determined walk, up hill and down hill, without flagging for an instant, unless the dogs come upon the scent of game. Of all sports, grouse-shooting is the most laborious. None can stand a comparison with it except deer-stalking; and yet the veriest "soft," puffing and blowing at every step, may put off a whole day upon the moors—travelling them I will not call it—and boast after dinner that "he wonders how people can find grouse-shooting so toilsome and fatiguing; *fox-hunting* is much more so!"

There are a few rules which a man not accustomed to climb hills will find his account in observing, if he would escape the suppressed smile of derision which his flagging will be sure to excite from the sturdy hill-man who carries his bag. One is, to eat a very light breakfast; another, to drink as little as possible—but especially no spirits and water. If you can hold out without drinking till your luncheon or dinner-time, your thirst will never be very oppressive; but once begin, and the difficulty of passing a clear brook is tenfold increased. The provision-basket should only consist of a cold fowl or a few sandwiches, and a bottle of table-beer or light ale. When you again begin your exertions, make your attendant carry a bottle of strong tea, without cream or sugar, which will more effectually quench your thirst than a whole flaskful of spirits and water to correspond. Should any object to this "*tea-total*" system, a little fruit may be no bad substitute. When I first took out a license, I thought the spirit-flask almost as indispensable as the powder-flask ; but experience has since taught me that nothing more effectually expends the remaining strength of the half-worn-out sportsman than a few pulls at the liquor-flask, however diluted : he gains a temporary stimulus, which soon ends in complete exhaustion.

As the season advances, and the birds become strong on the wing, the difficulty of breaking the packs is tenfold increased, and the sportsman's energy and activity doubly tried ; for, although he has not to endure the burning heat of August and September, yet his pace may with advantage be quickened, as there is less risk of passing birds ; and he should also carry a heavier gun. Taking everything into consideration, a medium between the common fowling-piece and that recommended for wild-fowl shooting on the lochs will be found the most efficient. A gun of this description ought to carry No. 5, or even 4, with the same regularity as a common gun would No. 7. Some fire very large shot among the birds, when they rise, in order to disperse them : this may often succeed, but is a most unsportsman-like proceeding. The plan I always adopt is, first to select my ground for the evening, taking care that it is full of hillocks: grouse have a great liking to them, and when thus concealed their flights are much shorter. I then commence ranging my other ground as described ; and when I get a shot, although the pack should rise at some distance, I select one of the leaders ; and, if it drop, the pack is far more likely to break, and the nearer birds are left for the second barrel.

Always cross the dog a good way ahead when he points, and cock both barrels; it is impossible to bring down your birds in crack style otherwise. Unless shooting in company, I generally have my gun cocked, and held ready to fire, when walking over ground where there is any likelihood of birds rising. This I only recommend to the experienced sportsman.

Never increase the size of your shot when the birds are wild, *unless with a larger gun.* Those who object to this additional weight, or who give their gun to be carried by a servant, will make but poor work at this season, as many of the best chances rise without a point at all. Stick to the last to scattered birds: one broken pack at this time is worth a dozen others.

About an hour before dusk, be upon the hillocks with your most experienced pointers: if they have been accustomed to grouse-shooting at the end of the season, they will hunt round them with the greatest caution; and when they wind birds, if ever so slightly, will point and look for your approach. Suppose your dog, statue-like, on one of the hillocks,—watch the direction of his nose, walk rapidly and noiselessly round in the opposite direction, as it were to meet his point, and you will most probably come upon the birds within fair distance. Should the hillock be steep, and only about a gunshot in height, walk straight over the top; and if the grouse be, as is most probable, on the side or at the bottom, you are certain of a tolerable shot. Should you have broken any packs in the morning, and driven them here, you are very likely to get some excellent chances.

As the shades of evening close upon you, the birds will lie much better; many a capital shot have I got when I could scarcely see them. A very indistinct view of his object is quite enough for a good snap-shot who is accustomed to his gun; and I would not guarantee the success of any other at this time of the year. In fact, you must be prepared for every shot being a snap at the beginning of the day, and many at the end. By always following the above directions, I scarcely ever, to the end of the season, came home with less than two or three brace after a few hours' shooting, upon a moor where I used, in August, to average from fifteen to twenty in a whole day.

When a moor is regularly shot over, and the large packs thinned, grouse are less apt to flock early, which is often occasioned by several large packs joining company. Late in the season, before they are tamed by a frost, a windy day generally produces the heaviest game-bag to a good quick shot. When his dog points, the sportsman has generally a shrewd idea where to expect the pack, as they collect behind rocks and hillocks, most frequently on the lee side. They keep all together, so there is no danger of stragglers; and as they don't hear so well in windy weather, he may often pop upon them close enough for a capital right and left.

An indifferent or poking shot should choose a sunny calm day at this time of the year; for although birds rise at a longer distance, yet their flight is so much slower than during a breeze of wind, that the length of the shot *to him*, in both cases, would most likely be pretty much upon a par. Added to which, in windy weather, they are apt to fly as twisting and irregular as snipe.

In a breezy day, never range near those parts of your marches where the wind strikes fair from your own to the adjoining moor. If you do, most of the birds will fly out of your bounds, notwithstanding every effort to intercept them.

The Perthshire grouse are much smaller and darker in colour than those of Argyllshire. The west Highlander is a beautiful rich red, and very large. Grouse are never so plentiful on the west coast, from the wet springs addling so many of the eggs. This deficiency in *quantity* is the reason of the superior *quality* of the Argyllshire birds; it being a never-failing rule that, when ground is overstocked, the creatures deteriorate. In the low corn districts, such as Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and the Border counties, the grouse are a very light brown, borrowing a tint from the stubbles on which they delight to feed. Snaring grouse in these counties on the "stooks," with wire no thicker than horse hair, is a very common way of poaching. Forty or fifty are often taken at a time, during the period between the corn being cut and carried. All these birds are so light in the colour as more nearly to resemble partridges. But let us take the mountain from top to bottom, and admire the wondrous care of the Divine appointments. The ptarmigan, the colour of its snowy summit in the winter time, and of the gray granite rock in summer; the grouse, lower down, exactly like its own red-brown heather in the autumn; while the partridge,* which subsists upon the little patch of corn that skirts the moor, has the yellower shade of the stubble on its wing.

As the nights grow long, grouse take a far fuller evening than morning feed. In mid-winter their crops at dusk are as hard as drums. They seldom fill them in the mornings then. Black-game also often content themselves with heather at this time, from scarcity of other food. Late in the year, both these birds sit best when evening feed begins.

No man ought to beat the same range oftener than twice a-week, as packs of grouse, after being dispersed, seldom all collect in the evening like partridges, but are often some time before they gather: the best days are those with a warm sun and light breeze. Cold wind and rain, after October, makes them flock; and it is of no use to disturb them till it is fine again, when they disperse. You may expect good sport the first black frost. A sort of lethargy seems to come over the birds: I have seen several in a day standing up, without an attempt at concealment, within forty yards—a rare opportunity for poachers and bad shots.

Many suppose that grouse change their ground with the changes of weather, and even lay down rules what parts of the mountain they frequent according to its variations. I have watched them narrowly for many years, and am firmly of opinion that they only shift to the longest heather on the lee side of any knolls near their usual haunts, when they want shelter from the sun, wind, or rain. When they become strong on the wing, and the weather is cold or boisterous, they will shift from one mountain-face to its opposite counterpart, to avoid the cold and take advantage of the sunshine, provided the distance does not much exceed their ordinary flight. This, I think, they never *willingly* do at the beginning of a season. I have likewise heard it asserted that grouse descend the hills to feed: this I also believe to be erroneous; and have no doubt that, at feeding times, they only move to the first short sweet patch of young heather, the tender tops of which form their chief food during a great part of the year—except indeed in winter, when many of them come down to lower ground than they ever frequent at other times. The young poults eat the seeds of the various grasses and weeds that grow in the moors, and are particularly fond of sorrel. At the hatching-time, the hen devours quantities of earth-worms with great avidity.

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* These moor partridges, which spend much of their time in the heather, are of a darker colour than those of the Lowlands.

BLACK-GAME

Black-game do not pair like grouse; and shooting the hen and young birds at the beginning of the season is a simple business.* You have only to make yourself master of the places they frequent. They may always be found near a short thick rush, easily seen on the moor, the brown seeds of which form the principal food of the young packs. When your dogs point near these rushes, and especially if they "road," you may be almost sure of black-game. The old hen generally rises first, the young pack lying like stones: no birds are more easily shot.

The old cocks, even in August, are never very tame: for although, where the heather or rushes are long and rank, they may lie tolerably well at first, yet even then they are sure to rise very high, and take a long flight, generally quite beyond your beat: they are sometimes found singly; at others, in small flocks, from six to ten. Their food on the moor consists of cranberries; another berry, found in mossy places, called in Scotland the "crawberry;" and the seed of the rush before-named.* They, being very strong on the wing, have not the same reason as the young packs for keeping near their food, and are often found far from it, especially in the heat of the day; shelter from the sun being their chief object. There can then be no better place to beat for them than among thick crops of bracken. Should you find them in such good cover, they will often give you a capital double shot.

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* Many gentlemen are now beginning to shoot the hens, observing the great increase of black-game and decrease of grouse in some districts. This may in part be attributed to the advance of cultivation; but I cannot help thinking the black-game have a good share in driving off the grouse—as I know of one instance where the former were killed off, and the latter again returned to their old haunts. I believe it is also more than suspected that the capercailzie, wherever they are introduced, have a great inclination to dispossess both. It is a curious fact, that the young capercailzie thrive better under the foster-care of the grey-hen than if left to their natural protectress. When a capercailzie's eggs are discovered, they are divided among several grey-hens, whose nests the keepers search out for this purpose. The grey-hens, however, will not sit upon them, unless some of their own eggs are also left. But when the young are hatched, they pay equal regard to both; and it is not until the capercailzie are fully grown that they drive away their step-mothers, who dread them as much as hawks.

As the season advances, black-game are the wildest of all birds. Fair open shooting at them is quite out of the question. As they seldom eat heather, their food on the moors soon becomes scarce; they then much more frequent the stubble-fields and copses by the hill-sides. You may often see twenty or thirty feeding together on the sheaves, when the corn is first cut; but they are exceedingly alert for the approach of an enemy. I have seen them doing the farmer as much injury as so many barn-door fowls. Your best plan then is to hide yourself among the sheaves, and wait for their feeding-hours. If you are well concealed, and select the proper part of the field, you may have an opportunity of killing a brace sitting with your first barrel, and another bird with your second.

As the fields become bare, and the days shorten, they begin to feed three times; namely, at daybreak, at noon, and an hour before dusk. To get a shot then is much more difficult. I have made a hole in the stone walls which enclose most of the Highland fields, in order to shoot through it. I have also placed a bush on the top to screen myself when rising to fire; but they have such quick sight and acute hearing, both well exercised, when feeding on this dangerous ground, that I have found it a better plan not to attempt the sitting shot. My way is to crawl as near the place where they are feeding as possible, and make my attendant and one of the farm-servants enter at each end of the field opposite, and come leisurely down towards the birds; they are then almost sure to fly over your head, and give you an excellent double shot. Care must be taken, however, to ascertain that no sentinel is perched upon the wall, or any high ground near, as there often is at the beginning of the feed. Should there be, wait patiently till he joins the flock. I have also, by this method, often got a capital chance at grouse feeding on the stubble, when returning home in the evening from shooting-ground on the Lammermuirs and in Selkirkshire.

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* I shot a fine old cock in August 1840, whose crop was full of a yellow flower of the dandelion kind, very common on the moors.

In a country where there are few corn-fields, you may get the best sport at old black-cocks by judiciously beating the plantations on the sides of the hills, especially if there are birch and alder in them, the tender tops of which form a great part of their winter food. They are still more likely to frequent these belts if juniper-bushes are near. But great caution is necessary in beating them. After quietly taking your station at the upper side, send your man, with an old and very steady pointer, to the under; keep about thirty yards in advance of them. The man must remain outside the plantation, striking the trees with a stick, and making all the noise he can. The pointer must not, if possible, range out of his sight. You are thus pretty sure of the shot; but if your man beats through the belt, the birds are very likely either to fly straight forward, or out at the under side. Two brace of old cocks may be considered a good day's sport. If the plantations are very large, beat by sections in the same way.

Even in woodcock shooting in *large covers*, unless there are a number of guns regularly placed between the beaters, more harm than good is often done by a noisy crowd. I never take more than one attendant, my retriever, and an old pointer. When I get a point, I choose the most open place, and send my man to strike the bush on the opposite side—employing my retriever to beat any very thick cover near. This, however, he is not allowed to do unless desired. Any man who adopts this plan will eventually be more successful than with beaters. More birds may, of course, be put up when a number of people are scouring the woods, but the shots will neither be so many nor so fair.

Black-game and grouse are easily tamed; ptarmigan, I believe, never. The keeper of the pheasantry at Rossdhu had a black-cock, a grouse, a partridge, and a pheasant, confined together. They agreed pretty well; and the grouse, being a hen, hatched two successive seasons. The first year the whole of this cross-breed died; but the next, with great care, a couple were reared. They were both cocks; and, when come to their full plumage in winter, were a blackish brown, something between the colour of a grouse and a black-cock. They were presented by my late father to the Glasgow Museums, where they may now be seen. I have given in the frontispiece an accurate likeness of that in the College Museum.

Before ending this subject, I may put gentlemen on their guard against two ways of poaching grouse and black-game, I believe not generally known. The first is, hunting the young packs, before the moors open, with a very active terrier or "colley." If the dog understands the business, he will chop a great many in a day. On a moor in Roxburghshire, I saw a sheep-dog, accompanied by a young farmer, performing to admiration. I had the curiosity to watch their proceedings, until I saw the dog snap a young grouse quick as thought. The other plan is to set traps on the peat-stacks, or in the green springs where the birds come to drink and to eat small insects. This last may be continued all the season. We often hear that these traps are set in the former case for hawks, and in the latter for carrion-crows. They may be, but any one who understands the habits of grouse and black-game knows what birds they are most likely to catch; and if this way of destroying vermin is persevered in by the keepers, "the laird" will soon begin to shoot his grouse minus a leg.

PTARMIGAN-SHOOTING

It is worth while to make an excursion to the rocky haunts of the ptarmigan, if only for the splendid views they command, and the strange novelty of the scene. Ben-Lomond, Ben-Vein, Ben-Voirla, and indeed all that lofty range in the west, are inhabited by these solitary denizens of the mountain-top. Except for this additional motive, however, not many sportsmen would be tempted to ascend them for the chance of the few shots they would be likely to obtain. Some of the mountains of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire are far easier of access, and the birds much more numerous: as many as ten or twelve brace may there be bagged in a day. Not having had the good fortune to shoot upon them, I can only speak from my experience in the West Highlands. The sportsman who climbs any of the mountains I have named, and falls in with the ptarmigan, cannot fail to observe how well it harmonises with the scene. Perched upon a ledge of the shelving rock, which it nearly resembles in colour, its wild look seems in contrast with the little dread it shows at the sight of man, who so seldom disturbs its craggy abode. They are even so stupid that, if stones are thrown over the pack, they will sometimes crouch down, in dread of their more common enemy, the hawk; and, bewildered at the sound of the gun, suffer themselves to be massacred one by one. This experiment, however, more often fails, when they all take wing together at the first stone; and far from being so slow as many suppose, they are quite as rapid in the air, or even more so, than grouse: they will also sometimes take as long flights, although their more common way is to fly round the angle of a rock or precipice, and immediately drop down.

I cannot better describe ptarmigan-shooting than by giving an account of the first day I ever enjoyed this sport, of which I have a most perfect recollection, and also of an expedition, in company with an English friend, some years ago.

When fresh from school, the first year I took out a license I went on a grouse-shooting excursion soon after the 12th of August. Having slept at the nearest farmhouse to the ground, I started at daybreak for the base of "the mighty" Ben-Voirla, where, I had been told, grouse were plentiful that year. My guide was the game-preserver, a reclaimed poacher, who had as quick an eye for a hare sitting, or a ptarmigan among the rocks, as ever peered from under a shaggy brow. After about three miles' very rough walking, we reached our destination. With eager hope I uncoupled my dogs, who soon came to a dead point; off went both barrels—it certainly was missing in good style!—not even a feather dropped to hang a peg upon for the exercise of my companion's ingenuity. All the excuse that his wit or wisdom could frame was—"You've made them leave that, at ony rate!" After two or three *equally successful* points, I began to wish myself well out of it; and, looking up to the stupendous mountain, asked if there was any chance of finding ptarmigan should we climb it. Having small hopes of my performance on wing, and knowing, from experience, that a sitting shot might thus be obtained, he caught at the plan, and we commenced our steep and toilsome ascent. An hour and a half brought us to the first shoulder of the hill, when all of a sudden he stopped, eagerness in every feature, and, pointing in the direction of a large rock, said—"If it wasna that I thocht it owre low, I would tak my oath that thing on the tap o' the rock is a ptarmigan." I now walked first, and, ducking down into a ravine, came out about sixty yards from our object. Immediately it took wing, and my gun was at the same moment discharged, with, I must confess, scarcely an attempt at aim. To my inexpressible delight, the bird dropped. Heedless of spoiling my dogs, I rushed up, and seized my prize. After carefully wrapping its broken wing in tow, to prevent the blood from soiling the feathers, and giving it in charge to my sharp-sighted friend, I proceeded for a fresh search.

My utmost hope now was to make out the brace, but we toiled to the top of the mountain without seeing another bird. I had sufficient opportunity to admire the care and skill with which my guide scrutinised every likely spot; passing over the hanging cliffs by which we were surrounded with a very superficial glance, he directed his chief attention to the *cairns*, or heaps of rock and stone scattered jaggedly about. All at once I felt his vice-like grasp upon my shoulder, the other hand pointing to one of these cairns, not twenty yards off. I strained my eyes to the utmost, but could see nothing, save the dull grey rock. His impatience grew extreme, and vented itself in loud whispers—"Shoot him sitting!" At last I caught sight of the bird, its head and tail carried low, and colour so like the jutting rock that it might well have been taken for one of the points—none but a practised eye could possibly have discovered it. With eagerness and trepidation my gun was raised—off went the shot—up went the ptarmigan with a hoarse croak—a fine cock! My second barrel followed the example of the first. The bird flew rapidly round the precipice, and with it my last lingering hope! I saw the difficulty of finding them, and despaired of hitting even when found. So we retraced our steps with my solitary bird, which happily served to stop minute inquiries about the day's sport.

Many years elapsed before I again visited Ben-Voirla, but in that time I had taken a leaf out of my instructor's book, and could also trust myself not to throw a chance away when the birds were discovered. I was now accompanied by a friend from the south—a very good shot, and particularly anxious to see and bring down a ptarmigan.

When we got to the foot of Ben-Voirla, we found that there were two packs on what is called the second top, and were thus saved the trouble of scaling the highest. So, taking two young farmers as guides, we reached the ground after a stiff climb. On ranging one side of the mountain, just as we were turning round to the other, the dogs ran into a small pack, which jerked round an angle, and were out of sight in a moment. I knew their flight would probably be a short one, so began to look about with the utmost caution. My friend, quite a novice in this sport, had no idea of finding the game himself, and continued to hunt the dogs with great assiduity. We happened to be pretty near together when they again "poked up" a ptarmigan. Neither of us thought of each other, or the ordinary rules of shooting, but fired at once, and down came the bird. This was rather unsatisfactory, as the "honour and glory" belonged to neither. However, we determined it should not happen again. I described what places the birds were most likely to haunt, and cautioned against trusting to the dogs, which were quite unaccustomed to such ground; but finding my companion preferred his own plan, I left him, and commenced my slow and wary search. At last I caught sight of a ptarmigan upon the very ridge of the hill, about thirty yards above me. It was in the same crouching attitude before described, and, had I attempted to put it up, would have dipped out of sight in an instant. I was therefore obliged to shoot it sitting. But the moment I fired, another flew straight over my head, his hoarse croak proclaiming the cock of the pack! I had a fair shot, and down he dropped. The first I killed being a hen, they made a capital pair for my collection.

I was now very anxious my brother sportsman should have a good chance. So, joining company, we reconnoitred the ground on every side without success: only one bird was put up out of all distance, which my friend determined to follow. So, agreeing to meet at the foot of the hill, we took different ranges. Fortune again declared in my favour; for, just as I was scrambling with hand and knee up a steep precipice, a pack of four rose upon the very top, and flew into mid air, just giving me time to steady myself, cock my gun, and get a distant shot, when one of them dropped into the gulf below. I sent my guide to fetch it, which he accomplished with some difficulty, and then despatched him in quest of my less successful companion, with the injunction that, if he joined in pursuit of my game, the odds would be *three* to *one* in his favour.

I had scarcely got to the peak, where I thought it most probable my three fugitives would again take refuge, when I was overtaken by one of those bitter hail-showers which often fall on the mountains in early autumn; so, placing my gun in its waterproof cover, and my back, Fitz-James-like, against a rock, I impatiently hoped for the cessation of the storm. Scarcely had it begun to abate, when an alpine hare came curtseying past about eighty yards from my shelter, and then seated herself with equal grace, as tempting a mark for a rifle as could possibly be placed. It was not to be resisted even with my small shot. So, slowly uncasing my gun, and taking *deadly* aim, I fired. Puss gave an active bound at this unlooked-for attack, and took her leave with far less ceremony than she made her *entrée.*

I had just reloaded, when my guide appeared with a breathless malediction on my gun. He had seen my friend going down the mountain, but quite beyond recall; and, when returning to me, had stumbled on the ptarmigan, most conspicuously perched on the top of a rock. He was in the act of taking his marks to know the place again, in the hope of finding me, when my shot abruptly put an end to his schemes. The birds were equally dissatisfied with the sound as their four-footed ally of the crags, and made the same use of their wings that she did of her legs. It was now late, but as the man had some idea of where they might be, I could not resist the temptation of giving them one more trial. We had almost given up hope, when they a third time rose, very wild, fully a hundred yards off, from a knoll of moss where they were at feed. My time was now "up," so I descended the mountain well pleased with my day's sport, notwithstanding the mishap at the end.

The ptarmigan, I believe, has never been tamed. It subsists on the rock-plants, mosses, and berries, upon which it is curious to see a pack feeding like grouse on young heather. The plumage begins to change colour in October, when the bird gains a double set of feathers for winter.

PTARMIGAN IN THEIR USUAL ATTITUDE

In spring, all these drop off, and it again assumes the colour of the rocks.

The woodcut represents a ptarmigan in its common attitude, cowering under shelter of a stone; the other is perched upon the top of a rock—an equally characteristic situation.

DOGS FOR THE MOORS

My advice on the subject of dogs must begin with the caution, never to lay too much stress on their general appearance. For my own part, I must confess that I am not very partial to the exceedingly fine-coated, silken-eared, tobacco-pipe-tailed canine aristocracy; for, even if their noses and style of hunting be good, they are invariably much affected by cold and wet weather, and can seldom undergo the fatigue requisite for the moors.

The most necessary qualifications of a dog are travel, lastiness, and nose. The two first are easily ascertained; but the other may not be found out for some time. I have seen dogs shot over for a season without committing many mistakes, and on that account thought excellent by their masters: their steadiness of course has been shown, but they have given no proof of first-rate nose. Even a good judge may be unable to form an accurate estimate of a dog's olfactory powers until he has for several days hunted him against another of acknowledged superiority. The difference may then be shown, not by the former putting up game, but by the latter getting more points. Should there be no tip-top dog at hand to compete with, the only other criterion, though not at all an infallible one, is the manner of finding game. The sportsman must watch most narrowly the moment when the dog first winds: if he throws up his head, and moves boldly and confidently forward, before settling on his point, it is a very good sign; if, on the contrary, he keeps *pottering* about, trying first one side, then another, with his nose sometimes close upon the ground, even though at last he comes to a handsome point, I should think it most probable that he is a badly-bred inferior animal.

Of all dogs, the worst for the moors is what is called a near ranger. Such flinchers may do well enough in preserved partridge ground, but on the steep hillside it is quite sickening to see their everlasting canter fifteen or twenty yards on each side. The dog-breaker may say that although the dog ranges near, he is working as hard as his more high-mettled competitor. For my own part, I never saw one travel in that way that either worked so hard, kept it up so well, or *found half as much game* as a free-hunting dog.

Let your pointers be *first-rate*, and a couple will then be quite enough to hunt at a time; more only encumber. If well broke, they will not pass over the near game, and when birds are scattered (the only time when the near-ranging *potterers* are in their element,) will find them one by one, with equal certainty and greater despatch. Many gentlemen, however, take no trouble about procuring good dogs, until just before the season begins, and consequently must put up with inferior ones, in which case they are forced to hunt three or four together, or have little chance of finding game. And a most vexatious thing it is, after all, to see these cross-bred ill-broke curs uniting their efforts to annoy;—one putting up birds, another finding none, while a third contents himself with admiring the feats of his companions! "What's Bob doing?" "Nothing." "What's Don doing?" "Helping Bob!!" Aware of what he has to expect should he be unprovided, the knowing man of the moors has always as many *good* dogs as he can work himself, and never suffers them to be hunted or shot over by another.*

The purchaser, before taking the trouble to try a dog, should make sure that he has a hard round foot, is well set upon his legs, symmetrically though rather strongly made; but the great thing is the head. It ought to be broad between the ears, which should hang closely down; a fall in below the eyes; the nose rather long, and not broad; nostrils very soft and damp. If these points are attended to, the dog will seldom have a very inferior nose. The above remarks relate principally to pointers, as I greatly prefer them to setters; but if the sportsman has a scanty kennel, I should rather recommend the latter, as they are often capable of undergoing more fatigue, and not so apt to be foot-sore. For my own part, however, I find the pointer so much more docile and pleasant to shoot with, that I never use setters; concerning the choice of which, as there are so many varieties, totally differing in appearance from each other, it would be useless to lay down any rules.

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* The only way to hunt two couple of dogs at the same time, without risk of slacking their mettle, or otherwise spoiling them, is for each couple to be commanded by a separate keeper, and at a sufficient distance apart to prevent interference. The sportsman can thus move from one to the other, as they find game. I, however, always prefer hunting my own dogs, and never suffer them to be spoken to by any one until I have fired, when I trust to my man to enforce the "down charge" *without noise.*

Many gentlemen, when the shooting-season begins, are shamefully taken in by dog-breakers and others. Few are aware how difficult it is to know a good dog before he is shot over. The breaker shows his kennel, puffing it off most unmercifully. The sportsman chooses one or two dogs that suit his fancy; they drop at the sound of the pistol, and perhaps get a point or two, when birds are so tame that no dog but a cur could possibly put them up. The bargain is struck, the dog paid for; but, when fairly tried, he shows his deficiency in finding game. I have seen the breaker look round with an air of the greatest triumph if a hare should start, and his dog not chase: this is what any man who understands the elements of breaking, by a little trouble, and taking the dog into a preserve of hares, can soon effect.

Other obvious defects, such as not quartering the ground, hunting down wind, not obeying the call or signal, the veriest novice in field-sports will immediately detect. It is not, however, with faults so apparent that dogs for sale are generally to be charged. They are, for the most part, drubbed into such show subjection, that the tyro fancies them perfect, and only finds out their bad breeding and nose after a week's shooting.* To assist the judgment of the uninitiated, I have given accurate likenesses of the two best pointers I ever had. I know some faults might be found in them, but they have all the main requisites.

If your dogs are well bred, the great secret of making them first-rate on the moor is, never to pass over a fault, never to chastise with great severity nor in a passion, and to kill plenty of game over them. There are two faults, however, to which dogs, otherwise valuable, are sometimes addicted; these give the sportsman great annoyance, but may often be more easily corrected than he is aware. One is the inveterate habit, contracted through bad breaking, of running in when the bird drops. This trick is acquired from the breaker's carelessness, in not *always* making the dog fall down when birds rise, a rule which should never be neglected, on any pretence. *The steadiness of a dog, whether old or young, depends entirely upon its being rigidly observed.* After the fault of running in is once learned, the quickest remedy is the trash-cord and spiked collar; but many gentlemen buy dogs before shooting over them, and commence their day's sport without these appendages. They are thus obliged either to couple up the dog, or run the risk of having any birds that remain,

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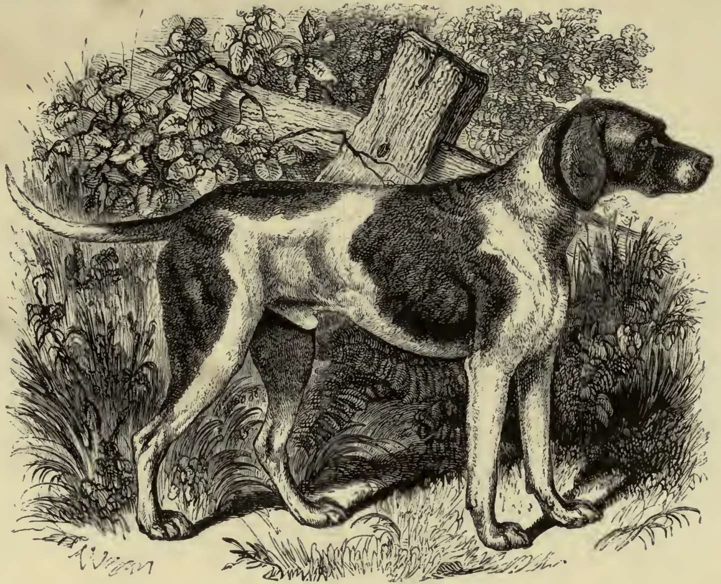
* Dogs of this kind remind me of an anecdote I remember to have heard from a brother sportsman, but for the truth of which I cannot vouch. Walking out with a high-broke pointer, he suddenly missed him, when he presently espied him soberly and submissively following the heels of an old Guinea-fowl, whose reiterated cry of "Come back! Come back!" he had thought it his duty to obey!!

THIS, AS MAY BE SEEN, IS A VERY OLD DOG



after the pack has risen, driven up, and those that have fallen mangled by him. I have seen dogs most unmercifully flogged, and yet bolt with the same eagerness every shot. It was easy to see the reason: the dog was followed by the keeper, endeavouring to make him "down;" there was thus a race between them which should reach the fallen bird.

The plan to adopt with a dog of this description is, when the grouse drops and the dog darts forward, never to stir—coolly allow him to tear away at the game until you have loaded; by which time he will most probably have become ashamed of himself. You will now walk up most deliberately, and, without noticing the bird, take the dog by the ear, and pull him back to where you fired, all the time giving several hearty shakes, and calling "down." When you get to the spot where you shot from, take out your whip, and between the stripes call "down" in a loud voice; continue this at intervals for some time, and, even when you have finished your discipline, don't allow the dog to rise for ten minutes at least; then, after speaking a few words expressive of caution, take him slowly up to the bird and lift it before his nose. If this plan is rigidly followed for several points, I never saw the dog that would continue to run in at the shot.

The other defect is chiefly applicable to young dogs: it is when they trust to their more experienced comrade to find the game, and keep continually on the outlook expecting him to do so. Nothing can be done for this but to pay the greatest attention to their point; selecting it in preference to that of the other dog, and always firing, however small the chance of hitting the bird. Also change the dogs they hunt with as often as possible. Young dogs, with this treatment, will very soon acquire confidence, and never keep staring at their companion, unless he is settling upon a point.

When the sportsman rears his own puppies, he should be most particular, not only about the acknowleged excellence of the sire and dam, but also that their breeding is unexceptionable and *well known*—especially that there is no cross of the rough, *however remote*, when breeding pointers, and no smooth blood when setters are the object. It sometimes happens that a dog, though not well bred, may turn out first-rate; but the progeny of such dog or bitch hardly ever do. This double caution is therefore most necessary, as otherwise much time and trouble might be spent upon a dog that never would be worth it, from a mistaken idea that, as his parents were excellent, he must *in the end* turn out well too.

To cross pointers and fox-hounds, or setters and spaniels, for the sake of improving the noses of the former or the travel of the latter, seldom answers. The one qualification *may* be gained, but the dog generally loses in every other.

In choosing young puppies, it is no bad plan (as the free-tempered and high-couraged generally turn out the best) to whistle out the litter, then strike your hands smartly together above their heads: the timid will at once shrink back. Give the preference to those who show least alarm. A timid sulky dog often grows worse as years increase; but a bold free one improves.

INSTINCT OF DOGS

It is often amusing to hear those who know little about the subject describing the "almost reason" of the St Bernard's dog, and not unfrequently of the Scotch "colley."

It appears to me that the instinct of these animals is more prominently forced upon their notice, and they do not take the trouble to watch and discover it in the other species. Sagacity is more equally distributed among the different varieties of the dog than such casual observers are aware of; but it, of course, takes different directions, according to the temper, habits, and treatment of the animal. It would be a waste of time so far to control the keen tempers of sporting-dogs (by which I mean setters and pointers) as to make them perform the duties of a well-broke phlegmatic retriever. The instinctive power may therefore appear greater in one than the other; but from the quiet easy temper of the retriever, it is much less difficult to develop and make use of his instinct in that particular way: while the setter and pointer, owing to their more active life and hunting propensities, may often pass unnoticed, even by their masters, though every time they are in the field displaying as much tact as the most cautious retriever. Their sagacity is never thought of; and the only praise they get is, that they are "excellent dogs;" which means *that they find plenty of game.*

There is another reason why sporting-dogs appear more deficient in sense than some others, and that is their mode of life. Confined always in the kennel, unless when seeking game, all their powers are employed to this end. There are, however, abundant proofs that, when made companions, and suffered to occupy a place upon the hearth-rug, they are capable of the same attachment, and would equal in sagacity the much-lauded dogs of St Bernard.* Indeed, the usual mode of imprisoning sporting-dogs is so great a disadvantage, that I have seen some, with excellent noses and every requisite for the moors, grow sulky, and refuse to hunt with their usual freeness, unless left in a great measure to themselves. This, I know, arose partly from a want of proper management, and not keeping the medium between encouraging kindness and merited correction; for too much lenity is nearly as injurious to a dog as over-severity: sulkiness will often be the effect in the one case, shyness in the other. Still, if the dog were allowed to be the companion of his master, he would both acquire sense and tact in half the time, and would not give half the trouble either by shyness or sulkiness; whereas it will generally be found, that a kennel-dog is long past his best before he excels in that sagacity on the moor which so greatly assists him in finding game. Even the veriest village-cur, when kindly treated and permitted to bask at the "ingle-nook," will learn all sorts of tricks, many of them requiring as much *reflection* as the most intricate duties of the shepherd's dog. I had a little cocker, reared in a cottage, that of its own accord, when only seven months old, brought in the post-bag, thrown down by the mail in passing. The person who had charge of it, having been detained a little, was astonished to see the bag safely deposited in the house; and, upon watching next day, saw the little creature marching along with its load. It had seen the bag carried in once or twice, and immediately learned to do so.

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* May we not be allowed to suppose the dog in Helvellyn, whose attachment to its dead master was thought a fit subject for their muse by two great poets of the day, was of the sporting kind?—at all events it was "*not of mountain-breed!!*"

I do not mean to deny that some varieties of the dog may excel others in sagacity—but this will be found in most cases to arise from other circumstances than the *natural gift*—and that dogs, whose avocations require a phlegmatic quiet temper, have certainly the advantage over others, though the instinctive powers of both, in the first instance, may have been equal. A terrier, for example, may and has been taught to herd sheep, and if kept to this employment, would appear more sensible; but his snappish disposition (an advantage in his own more congenial occupations) renders him unlikely to excel in those of the colley. The latter again is admirably adapted for his own work: his thick rough coat protects him from the severity of the weather, to which he is constantly exposed, and his less ardent temper prompts him to look for guidance from his master in all his movements. Both sheep-dogs and terriers may be taught to point, but they are always deficient in *hunt*, and their olfactory powers are never so acute as in those dogs which nature seems to have formed for the purpose. We thus see that dogs are trained to different employments, for many qualifications apart from their instinctive powers, though these may be materially increased or retarded by the nature of their occupations.

The Newfoundland and water-dog are generally reckoned paragons of sagacity; but has their treatment nothing to do with this? From their earliest days taught to fetch and carry, and never leaving their master's side, they learn to understand his least signal, and, from constant practice, sometimes even anticipate his will. This is also precisely the case with the colley: as soon as it is able, made to follow the shepherd to the hill, and from every-day habit always on the alert to please him, it daily acquires greater dexterity both in comprehending and obeying, till at last it can perform feats that perfectly astonish those who have not seen the gradual process. My retriever, to be spoken of anon, has given many proofs of sagacity which have excited the admiration of those present; and yet I don't consider him at all more knowing than the old pointer, whose cut I have already given. A superficial observer would wonder at the comparison; but, independent of the tact and ingenuity displayed by the pointer in finding game, I feel convinced that if his educational advantages and temper had been the same as the retriever's, he would have equalled him *in his own beat.**

To illustrate my meaning, I may mention a feat or two of each:—Having wounded a rabbit on the moors when the pointer was behind a knoll, but fancying, from the agility with which it made its escape, that I had missed it altogether, I was surprised to see him shortly afterwards bring a rabbit and deliberately lay it down at my feet. It would have been nothing if the dog had been taught to fetch and carry; but, on the contrary, he is, of course, broke to drop at the shot and never to lay a tooth upon game. Had he seen me fire and afterwards stumbled upon the rabbit, he would from his breaking have thought he had no business to touch it; but, not having seen the shot, he fancied he had a right to bring what he had himself found upon the moor. Any person who was no judge of dogs would have said, "Why, this is no more than what any retriever puppy would have done." It is not, however, the mere act alone, but the connecting circumstances which often show the superior instinct of the canine species.

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* Both these invaluable dogs have been under the sod for some years. They died of pure old age and hard work. One day, shortly before the old pointer's last 12th of August, a knowing keeper remarked to my man, "Surely you don't mean to hunt *that* dog. Why, he is not fit to walk along the road, let alone travelling the moors." Never was man more "out." According to my custom, I threw off with old Cigar and his comrade at eight o'clock, and hunted them till two, when they were relieved by a fresh pair. I shot till near eight in the evening, and bagged thirty-five brace. Fully the half fell to the old dog's point, and I never saw him hunt or find better in his life. It was his twelfth 12th!

The performances of the retriever are more showy, and the generality of observers would immediately on that account pronounce him the more sagacious dog. In taking a walk with him one winter, I met a friend who had dropped a whip: if this had happened to myself, there would have been no difficulty, as I had only to send the dog off upon my track; but, upon trial, he immediately ran back upon that of my friend, recovered the whip, and brought it to me. Another time, when he was following an open carriage, a shawl was dropped; no one perceived the loss until the dog was seen carrying it in his mouth behind. Not long after, a bouquet of flowers was missed: I immediately looked round for the retriever, and, to be sure, there he was with the bouquet most jauntily carried in his mouth. But perhaps the following instance may serve still better to show the

He died the following spring, and was immortalised by a *dog*-grel epitaph:—

> "We climbed the rocky hills, and trod the heather,
> And many a 12th of August have we seen together.
> At length thy foot grew weary, age its only clog;
> And here thou art at rest, my poor old dog!"

Poor Gruff died a couple of years after Cigar, but I have never been able to replace him by a worthy successor—at least by one uniting all his excellencies. A Tweed spaniel came the nearest to him in docility, but, like most of these silken gentry, he is shy of the water in cold weather Gruff was as hardy in the winter-storm as a walrus.

influence of temper and education upon the instinct of dogs. Having taken sea-bathing quarters for my family, about forty miles from my residence in Perthshire, I walked there over the hills, accompanied by my faithful retriever. When I returned for a week's shooting, I ordered old Gruff to remain behind. After waiting three days, and finding I did not come back as he expected, he started off one night about nine o'clock, made his way through the most intricate bye-paths and short cuts of all descriptions, across a deep ferry, and arrived at home about five next morning, when he was discovered lying at the door. There are many authenticated accounts of dogs making much more distant journeys than this; but the point to be noticed is, his remaining three days, though perfectly at large, and then taking his departure. A keen-tempered dog would have started the next day, at latest, or, by having his attention engrossed with other things, have remained quietly where he was. Even in the former case, he would not have gained half so much credit for sagacity, as every one must have perceived that the patient retriever waited to see whether or not his master would return. Few would give themselves the trouble to remark that his education and apathetic temper favoured him in this particular, and that equal instinct might have been shown in the more hasty resolves and quicker movements of another. It is thus that keen dogs always appear deficient in sense, because they are hurried away by their temper from one thing to another; and their feats are seldom such as to arrest the attention or excite the wonder of the general observer. The instances I have given are merely mentioned as explanatory of my theory—viz., that we are apt to overvalue one dog for sagacity, while we overlook its more unpretending neighbour, because, from shyness, surliness, eagerness of temper, or want of practice, all its powers of instinct and memory are employed in *a different and less obvious way ;* for there is no doubt, if a dog is eager, shy, or sulky, it may have superior instinct, and yet *show less* than another of a more phlegmatic, sociable, or easy disposition. This accounts for the difficulty of procuring a good retriever from a cross between the water-dog and terrier, so valuable if the medium between them is preserved; because, when the dog partakes too much of the nature of the terrier, his quick temper unfits him for the purpose,* and when too little, he is generally deficient in nose. A cross between the water-dog and any others of the sporting kind would be still less likely to suit; and the Newfoundland is too large, and of the wrong colour. Perhaps (the noses of colleys and terriers being pretty much upon a par) a breed between a water-dog and colley might answer well; there is only the objection, that the progeny might be too large and conspicuous.

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* A dog of a very cool temper will retrieve wild-fowl better in loch-shooting, than another with quicker movements and perhaps a finer nose. Many of the cripples in this shooting take refuge in weeds and bushes, and the keen-tempered dog is apt to overrun them, thus losing time; whereas the other slowly tracks them one by one to their hiding-place. It must be recollected that I do not speak of coast and cover-shooting, where more agility is required : on the coast, from the numbers to be secured after a heavy shot of the stanchion-gun ; and in cover, that wounded hares and rabbits, winged pheasants, &c., may be more speedily retrieved. For my own part, I should prefer the slow dog even in cover; but few sportsmen like to wait.

With regard to the St Bernard dogs, what is it they do but what almost any dog of *equal strength* might be taught also? It is certainly a noble occupation, but far, I should think, from difficult, to teach a dog to run the track of a man upon the bare mountain, and either guide or carry the benumbed wretch home. The colleys in the Highlands do the same when sheep are in jeopardy, and know their own flocks from any others. They will also climb hills and work by the slightest signal from their masters at the foot.* All this may appear very wonderful to any one unacquainted with the nature of dogs; and still more so when he sees the very colley which had excited his admiration, completely outdone in some *more domestic* feats of usefulness by a wretched turnspit.

If, therefore, my hypothesis be correct,—that there is not so much *real* difference in the instinct of dogs, but that the degree of sagacity they will exert for our benefit or amusement depends in a great measure upon their tempers and dispositions; and that the *treatment* they meet with has much to do in forming these tempers and dispositions,—it follows that too great care cannot be taken to train them properly, and especially *never to correct in anger or caprice.*

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* A shepherd of my late father, celebrated for having the best colleys in the country, preferred those with quick tempers, *to save himself trouble.* This man used to stand at the door of his hut, sending his dogs to "clear the marches," at the tops of the highest hills. They worked by signal long after they could not hear his voice. For this distant work, a slow dog, though more easily broke at first, and steady as a rock afterwards, was often found too lazy. The shepherd has known one lie down to rest for an hour behind a rock, when he thought himself unobserved. He therefore reserved these cool geniuses for the near work, and sent the younger and more keen-tempered on the distant and toilsome duty.

ROEBUCK CLEANING HIS HORNS

ROE-HUNTING

Many of the woods that fringe our most romantic lochs and glens abound with the roe; its chief food being the leaves in summer, and the tender tops of the trees in winter. I do not mean to say that it is not also fond of grass or clover, but the other is its most natural choice. So destructive is it to young woods, that many gentlemen give it no quarter on this account. Even trees of considerable growth are not safe from its attacks; the buck sometimes fixing his horns against the stem, walking round and round until the ground is bared, and the bark so injured that the tree dies. The favourite haunts of the roe are those belts of young plantation, surmounted by large pine-forests, common throughout the Highlands: the former supply it with food, and the latter give it shelter.

The pursuit of the roe, if followed in a proper way, affords first-rate sport, and taxes to the full the strength, skill, and energy of the hunter; but this is seldom the case, and the generality of roe-hunts are nothing but blunders from beginning to end. The common way of proceeding is, to place half-a-dozen gentlemen with their guns in the passes, and then, with a host of beaters and dogs, to scour the plantations, always commencing at the windward side, where the roes are sure to be found. I confess I have no great liking to this plan; the plantations are thoroughly disturbed, almost every head of game being driven out; and I never saw a party of this kind succeed much better than when one or two experienced roe-hunters had the whole sport to themselves.*

A description of one of these noisy parties will, with a few exceptions, apply to all. We will suppose the sportsmen snugly in their passes, while the beaters and dogs are in full hoot and howl in the wood below: one man allows the roe to slip by unobserved, until it is almost out of reach, then fires his buck-shot, perhaps wounding his game, which the dogs are unable to run down; another never sees it at all; a third shows himself in the pass, and so throws away his chance; and I have even known two instances of our brethren from the south leaving their posts for a time to take a comfortable luncheon—their love of a roe-pasty prevailing over their love of the chase.

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* The roe is occasionally stalked, and shot with the rifle, and I have heard it alleged that it is thus raised to the dignity of a deer, whereas the common method of buck-shot degrades it to the level of a hare. Having several times tried this experiment, I may safely pronounce it a most wretched burlesque upon deer-stalking. Roes almost always confine themselves to the woods, and although, by peeping round corners and openings in the plantations, you may sometimes get a good rifle-shot, yet you are much more apt to come upon them quite within

One of them was only detected by the hounds and roe having run right through his pass during his absence. Although a man should not be so churlish as to refuse joining a party of this kind, yet I could excuse any knowing roe-hunter for anticipating with greater pleasure and hope of success the day when he should take the field alone.

Such a one will always prefer a day with scarcely a breath of air, high wind being destruction to his sport: first, from the difficulty of hearing the hound; and, next, from the currents of air which he will be obliged to avoid, lest the roe should wind him. His only companion is a very slow and steady hound. Thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, he places himself in that he considers the best, ready to change his position should the baying of the hound seem to indicate that the roe has taken a different direction. If it escapes at the first burst, he is not at all disconcerted, as his tactics now begin. The roe perhaps stretches away into the large pine-forest, and he sees his good hound slowly and surely threading his way through the thick underwood, making the welkin ring. Now is the time for our sportsman to display the strength of his lungs and limbs. Aware that the roe,

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range of buck-shot, especially if the cover is not very thin, which a good haunt of roes seldom is. They are thus almost sure to see and hear you, and steal away unperceived; but should you succeed in getting the shot, it is pretty certain to be a running one, and you will stand but a poor chance with a rifle at a roe bounding among thick plantations. The great excitement of deer-stalking consists in seeing your game from a distance without being yourself perceived, which affords ample scope for skill and tact in approaching it.

after a fair heat, will probably slacken his speed, and with the hound scarcely more than a hundred yards behind, course slowly round and round a knot of hillocks, perhaps for half an hour at a time, he will use his utmost efforts to keep within hearing of the bay. Whenever this appears nearly confined to one place, he advances with extreme caution, peering round at every step, with his gun cocked and held ready to fire. The sound seems now at hand—again more distant, as it is obstructed by the intervening hillocks; he conceals himself upon an angle of one of them, near the centre of the knot, to command as good a view both ways as he can. If the hound continues opening near, he watches with the utmost vigilance, almost holding his breath to catch the slightest sound. After waiting some time, should the dog still remain near, he will occasionally shift his position, but always with the same caution.

A novice would scarcely believe the noiseless step with which a roe will often pass, and the scanty covering of brushwood that will screen it from observation. Should it slip by in this manner, you will of course immediately know by the tracking of the hound, which has often made me aware of its almost magical transit. Attention and experience, however, will considerably lessen the roe's chance of escape. Whenever it takes another direction, follow at your best speed, until it again tries the dodging game. Continue the pursuit so long as your hound is stanch, and your own strength holds out, taking advantage of every pass within and round the wood.

Here let me give two cautions—always to dress as near the colour of the ground and trees as you can, and, when concealed, never to make the least motion: if you do, the roe will at once perceive it and stop short. You will most likely only be made aware of its having done so by the hound coming within forty or fifty yards, and then turning away in another direction. When properly dressed, even should your place of concealment not be very good, the roe will be pretty sure to pass *if you keep perfectly still.* This is even more necessary when expecting a hill-fox. Should the roe take a straight course, right out of your beat, you must await its return; which, if it has not been alarmed or shot at, you may pretty confidently expect.

In recommending the above manner of roe-shooting, it must be remembered that I do not say it is easy; but I do say, that, when thoroughly understood, it will be attended with much greater success in the long run, and the roes will be less disturbed, than when many of the passes are kept by novices in the sport. I once, in Kenmure wood, at the head of Loch Lomond, by this mode killed two in a few hours—one of them a very fine old buck—without harassing any others; while a party of five or six of us, and beaters to correspond, after alarming the whole wood, and firing many shots, only got three yearling fawns in four whole days.

Many gentlemen have a great prejudice against allowing hounds to enter their covers, for fear of driving the roes away, when the blame should rather be laid on their large party, unskilful manœuvring, and long random shots. I have had good proof that roes are not so much afraid of fox-hounds as people suppose. A gentleman of my acquaintance had a newly-planted wood much injured by them: he desired the gamekeeper to hunt them out. So little, however, did this frighten them, that they have been known to return within an hour after the hounds were taken off; nor would they leave the place until one or two had been shot.

Nor is this the only instance which has come within my own notice. On the shooting-ground which I took for a season at Kinnaird, in Perthshire, was a pine wood, with an oak copse at the side; here I frequently saw a fine buck and two does feeding. They were very tame, and I tried in vain to beat them out with the shepherd's dogs. I had not then much knowledge of roe-hunting; but I procured an old hound, and pursued them every day for a week without getting a shot. They were still to be found in their old haunts every morning, although ever so hard hunted the day before. They would take a stretch upon the open moor for an hour, and then return, always keeping together; and it was only by marking a much-used pass that I at length succeeded in getting a very fair right and left, killing the buck with one barrel, and one of the does with the other. A stray shot struck the other doe, which happened to be in line, and broke her leg, although I was not aware of it. Two days after, a farmer sent me word that a wounded roe had been seen in the wood. I again put the hound into the cover, and in a short time the poor creature came limping past, when I shot it, to prevent the dog from putting it to a more cruel death. I do not mention this as claiming any merit, for the shots were open, near, and easy; greater skill might have secured them some time before: but I think a fair inference in proof of my assertion may be drawn from this and other instances of the kind.

When roes haunt a small belt of plantation, it is often impossible to say where they will break cover. The surest plan is to take a pass a little way off, as the roe, wherever it may break, soon falls into a beaten track when leaving one wood for another.

It is a rare thing to take a right and left at roe; they slip past so quickly, and generally in small numbers. I have known many old sportsmen who have shot them all their lives, and yet never killed a couple right and left. Blood-hounds are now coming into vogue, instead of fox-hounds, for running them out of thick coverts. From the truer nose, slower movement, and more deep-toned voice of the blood-hound, he is certainly far better adapted for the purpose. This noble dog is supposed to be the lineal descendant of the old deep-flewed English slot-hound, or talbot; and there is certainly little difference, except in colour. The prevailing hue of the talbot was white, that of the blood-hound is black and tan. All the finer qualities of the talbot have been sacrificed in his degenerate successor—the fox-hound of modern days—to acquire the great desideratum, *speed.*

Never gralloch* a roe near a favourite pass, *unless you wish it to be forsaken.*

The roe's sagacity in discovering real from apparent danger is remarkable: the crouching shooter with his deadly gun is instantly detected, while the harmless workman may even blast the rock and cause no alarm. This fact I have been assured of by men employed on the Highland road, who had often seen the roes peeping at them from the cliffs above, watching their whole proceedings without any signs of fear.

The roe has no great kindliness for the fallow-deer. It is a curious fact that, on Loch Lomond, there are two large wooded islands which the roes constantly frequent, without ever crossing to a third, where deer are kept, though well adapted to their habits. When swimming in and out of these islands, the roes have regular passes, as on land; but if a boat be near they will never attempt to cross. A few years ago, an English gentleman wishing for a couple, a plan of catching them in the water was thought of. For this purpose, boats were concealed near the passes, and the roes hunted out of the islands. But they were such dexterous swimmers, and doubled so well, that they always escaped, until the thought of fixing a noose to a pole suggested itself, by which simple device they were soon secured. In a short time they became quite domesticated, and would eat from the hand of their keeper.

Another was caught many years ago, which my brothers and I, when boys, begged to be allowed to tame. We used to bring it leaves in great quantities, which it would eat from our hands, always preferring those of the mountain-ash. The confinement, however, did not agree with it; and, although supplied with grass, clover, and everything we could think of, it fell off in condition, and we were obliged to set it free.

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* Clean out the inside.

The roe has two young ones at a time, the most beautiful little creatures possible. It is curious to see them, when started, bound away with the greatest activity, though no bigger than a cat.

THE ALPINE OR WHITE HARE

SOMETIMES CALLED THE BLUE HARE

THE white hare inhabits many of our mountains. It is not confined, like the ptarmigan, to the tops of the highest and most inaccessible, but, on the contrary, is often met with on grouse-shooting ranges, where there are few crags or rocks to be seen. I have frequently shot it on flats, between the hills, where it had made its form like the common hare; and, though I have more often moved it in rocky places—where it sometimes has its seat a considerable way under a stone—I do not think it ever burrows among them, as some suppose; for, although hard pressed, I have never seen it attempt to shelter itself, like a rabbit, in that way. Indeed, there would be little occasion for this, as its speed is scarcely inferior to the hares of the wood or plain, and it evidently possesses more cunning. When first started, instead of running heedlessly forward, it makes a few corky bounds, then stops to listen—moving its ears about; and, if the danger is urgent, darts off at full speed, always with the settled purpose of reaching some high hill or craggy ravine. If not pressed, it springs along as if for amusement; but takes care never to give its enemy an advantage by loitering.

I put up one, on the 16th of March 1840, when inspecting the heather-burning on my moor, at Leny in Perthshire, which (contrary to their usual practice) kept watching, and allowed me several times to come within a hundred yards. I was at first surprised, but the explanation soon occurred to me that it had young ones in the heather. I had thus a good opportunity of noticing the commencement of its change of colour. The head was quite grey, and the back nearly so; which parts are the last to lose, as well as the first to put on, the summer dress. I shot one nearly in the same stage, on the 22d of November 1839.* The only difference was, that the whole coat of the former appeared less pure. This is easily accounted for, as in winter the creature, though receiving a fresh accession of hair, loses none of the old, which also becomes white; whereas in spring it casts it all, like other animals. Thus, by a merciful provision, its winter covering is doubly thick;

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* I twice shot fine specimens of the alpine and common hare on the same day. The difference between them, when thus closely compared, was very perceptible. The head of the alpine was much rounder, which was rendered more obvious by the shortness of its ears. The scut was also ludicrously small; while the roundness of the body was increased by the soft and very thick coat of fur, which made that of the common hare appear hard and wiry. One of the alpine hares was shot on the 17th of September; there was not the least appearance of the change of colour. The other, shot on the 6th of October, had a few silver hairs about the toes. On the 11th I shot another which had the feet and half the hind-legs white, and was a little silvered behind the ears.

while at the same time, being the colour of snow, (with which our hills are generally whitened at that time of year,) it can more easily elude its numerous foes. The same remark applies to the ptarmigan.

During a mild winter, when the ground is free from snow, the white hare invariably chooses the thickest patch of heather it can find, as if aware of its conspicuous appearance; and to beat all the bushy tufts on the side and at the foot of rocky hills, at such a time, affords the best chance of a shot. The purity or dinginess of its colour is a true criterion of the severity or mildness of the season. If the winter is open, I have always remarked that the back and lower part of the ears retain a shade of the fawn-colour; if, on the contrary, there is much frost and snow, the whole fur of the hare is very bright and silvery, with scarcely a tint of brown. When started from its form, I have constantly observed that it never returns, evidently knowing that its refuge has been discovered. It will sometimes burrow in the snow, in order to scrape for food, and avoid the cold wind, as well as for security. These burrows are not easily discovered by an unaccus-

On the 2d of December I shot another couple: the lower part of the body and hind-legs were like swan's down, the back and sides grizzled, and the only unchanged parts were the crown of the head and cheeks. The last day I went after them was on the 15th of December, when I wished to ascertain whether the change was quite complete. On that day I killed two hares and a leveret, and was astonished to find that one of the former was in the same stage as those shot on the 2d of December; while the change in the other hare and in the leveret was complete, except indeed a shading of grey on the back, which is never purely white but in the depth of the *severest winters.*

tomed eye; the hare runs round the place several times, which completely puzzles an observer, and then makes a bound over, without leaving any footmark to detect her retreat. It is hollowed out, like a mine, by the hare's scraping and breath, and the herbage beneath nibbled bare.

When deer-stalking in Glenartney last autumn, I was quite amazed at the multitudes of alpine hares. They kept starting up on all sides, some as light-coloured as rabbits, and others so dark as to resemble little moving pieces of granite. I could only account for their numbers from the abundance of fine green food and the absence of sheep, which are as much avoided by hares as by deer, from their dirting the ground with their tarry* fleeces.

An eye-witness, on whom I can depend, gave me a curious account of the tactics of a hill hare, which completely baffled the tyrant of the rocks. Puss, as is her wont when chased by an eagle, sheltered herself under a stone. The eagle took post at a little distance, and watched long, exactly like a cat waiting for a mouse. Although her fierce foe was out of sight, the hare seemed to have a *mesmeric* knowledge of his vicinity, for she never would move so far from her hiding-place as to be taken by surprise. Several times she came out to feed, but the moment the eagle rose she was safe again. At last her pursuer got tired, and flew away. The white hare has always a refuge of this kind where eagles haunt.

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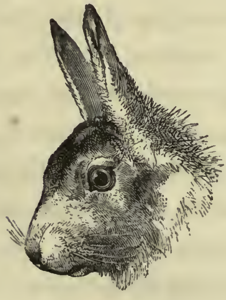
* Should anybody be disposed to call in question the correctness of this word, I beg to say my title to it is long use and wont: "Tarry woo', tarry woo'!—tarry woo' is ill to spin."

The brown hare is not on good terms with his mountain cousins. The latter have enormously increased, by the wholesale destruction of the larger vermin, such as eagles, wildcats, martins, &c. They have completely dispossessed the common ones of those territories where they abound. Like the northern hordes, I rather think they owe possession of the land as much to their numbers as their courage, for the brown hare, although proverbially timid, is very pugnacious. I once saw a battle between two of them, which appeared exactly like monkeys sparring. On slipping cautiously forward, to see what this Lilliputian fight could mean, I was much amused to find it was a couple of Jack hares, reared upon their hind-legs, pummelling each others heads and shoulders with right good-will. The blows were sharp and true; and if all the old brown champions boxed the ears of their alpine kin to the same tune, it must have been no easy matter for the hill-men to make them sound a retreat.

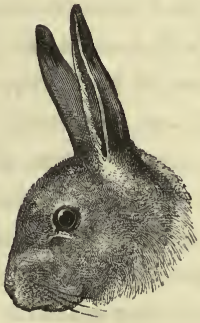
Should an alpine hare be started at the base of a cairn, if unpursued, she will most likely run up to a large piece of rock, and place her back against it, watching the motions of the enemy underneath. She will remain long in this position, quite still. If the sportsman leaves his attendant at the foot of the cairn, and, by taking a circuit, comes down above, there is no danger of the hare seeing him. The only difficulty is to find out *the* rock, among so many pretty much alike, especially as its shape from above is often very different from what it appeared below. To prevent mistakes, I generally directed my game-carrier to hold out his blue-bonnet in his right or left hand, to point out on which side of me the rock lay; but if it was directly below me, to place his bonnet on the ground. In a calm day, I have sometimes taken off my shoes, to prevent the hare from hearing my steps, and very seldom failed to shoot her. This miniature stalking is within the reach of many grouse-shooters; and, by trying their skill at it when the birds grow wild, they may find out whether they have any turn either for wild-fowl or deer-stalking.

When one of these hares is pursued by a colley or terrier, she will run round and round the hill, on her own track, trying to confound the scent, and, as a last resource, scuttle along a watercourse, if there is one near.

The alpine hare is a good deal less than the common—shorter, and stouter made for its size; and its legs stronger, for climbing in rocky places. Its colour in summer is a blue fawn; and in winter the tips of the ears, which are much shorter than those of the common species, are jet-black.



ALPINE



COMMON

WOODCOCKS AND SNIPES

The habits of woodcocks and snipes cannot fail to interest every one who has opportunity for observing them. There is a method in their movements which arrests the attention of a naturalist; but, unless he is a sportsman too, they are less apt, than many other birds, to come under his notice.

The first few woodcocks generally arrive about the beginning of October. Their approach is always made known by the red-wing, which bird one cannot help connecting with the woodcock, as guests who commonly arrive together, however unlike in other respects. When woodcocks first come, they keep to the open ground, taking refuge in brushwood, rushes, or heather. At this time they are constantly found and pointed on the moors; comparatively few frequent the coverts, at least in the daytime: towards dusk, I have seen them come down to the springs. The first frost, however, drives them to the woods, where the ground is of course less hard. Should the weather continue severe, many take refuge under thick hollies or junipers, especially where these bushes are surrounded by plashy ground. It is worth notice that if a woodcock is found at one of the covert springs, about dusk in October, he is sure to be at the same place in the daytime when the frost sets in. Each bird has its own favourite evergreen retreat, which it does not abandon till the weather becomes open. A good beater well knows that this bush should be struck smartly on the opposite side from the gun, or the woodcock is warned, and flies away hidden by the boughs.

During a long-continued period of frost and snow, most of the woodcocks leave the inlands for the oak and larch belts on the coast, in order to feed upon the sea-worms within tide water-mark. This sea-ground, of course, is seldom much affected by frost, and is the last resource of the woodcock during a storm. In the severe winter of 1838-9, hardly a stray cock was to be found in the inland coverts after the first few weeks of hard frost. Numbers were seen, dead and dying of starvation, among the plantations which skirted the sea, even the sea-worm having failed about the end of that long-continued storm.

The passages of the woodcocks, either at evening flight, or from one part of a coppice to another, when flushed, seldom vary twenty yards. In beating *large* coverts, shots who are aware of this have a great advantage. After once seeing the bird fly, they can form a shrewd guess where to place themselves next time. By facing the beaters, and securing any opening that the cock may have skirted, they will rarely be disappointed, as every woodcock will be found next day at its former post, and take precisely its former course, *if sprung in the same direction.* Should the bush or tree be beaten on the opposite side to what it was the day before, the woodcock has likewise a well-known flight the reverse way. So certain is this propensity, that, even in long narrow strips of plantation, every woodcock flies to the side (unless prevented by bungling irregular beating) a short time after being flushed—the sharp fliers a little farther on, and the tame proportionally nearer. The flight of both can be easily calculated: and if there are two pairs of experienced shots outside the wood, one pair for the wild and the other for the tame birds, scarcely any escape without being fired at.

There are, however, many plantations, and these often the most noted haunts of the woodcock, which it is impossible to beat by the above methods. Few sportsmen would even walk through some of our tangled coverts in the Highlands, and shooting is out of the question,

> "Where, sunk in copse, your furthest glance
> Gains not the length of horseman's lance;
> And oft so steep, the foot is fain
> Assistance from the hand to gain."

It is in such places that cockers and springers are of *real service.* The woodcocks generally fly straight over the tops of the trees, and drop down near the opposite side of the covert. Sometimes they take the whole round, and pitch close to where they were sprung.

Should one of these large circular belts be placed on the steep side of a hill, there is a capital opportunity for taking a lesson in the tactics of this bird. By placing yourself upon an opposite knoll, every flushed woodcock is immediately seen, and his course traced without the possibility of subterfuge or evasion. Many sportsmen place a marker upon this point; and are thus directed to the very spot where all the sprung birds have pitched. But it they had the patience to watch a few times for themselves, they would be amply rewarded by insight into the manœuvres of this interesting visitant. If sprung fairly, most of them will top precisely the same trees, and fly past the same openings every time. Some will make it their rule to pitch down after taking one stretch across; others, by wheeling about, take two; while a few lazy ones may content themselves with a flight only half through the wood. If flushed a second time, however, their movements, *for that day*, are not so much to be depended on. Should the party of beaters be numerous and noisy, many of the woodcocks will drop down outside the covert; especially if much persecuted and driven about. Some sly old fellows try this ruse after their first flight. The sportsman, therefore, should always walk round the plantation, outside, before quitting it. But, as most of the birds will fly sharp, he must be prepared for snaps. The extreme regularity of the woodcock's flight has been proved to me, even after putting him up the second time. We flushed one in the Kilmun coverts, out of reach. He flew straight for a bit of marshy ground; some woodcutters were at work there, and prevented his settling. In a short time we noticed him come back, and light close to the same spot where he was first put up. He again rose wild; but my beater reminded me of the woodmen. So we stationed ourselves in the line of his return progress, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him, as we expected; and I shot him flying over my head.

In overgrown larch plantations, with long bare stems, it is impossible to fire too soon, as all the shots must be taken before the birds rise to the branches. If, on the contrary, the covert is low, the cock should be allowed to get among the tree-tops; and there will, most likely, be opening enough for a quick shot. Otherwise, pick a snap through the *thinnest* screen of tree-tops and branches. To do all this *mechanically*, requires both self-command and long practice. Of course these remarks refer to large plantations, where there are no open spaces to take advantage of.

A few woodcocks remain to breed in this country; and nests of young are found, most seasons, in the heathery islands of Loch Lomond. When the summer is very warm, they, like the wild-drakes, moult so severely as for a short time to be unable to fly. I have occasionally seen them in the twilight, after a calm, clear, summer day, chasing each other high in the air; making a piping noise not unlike the "blouting" of a mire-snipe. In former times, I never heard of their nests being discovered: so, most likely, our less sunny summers have induced a sprinkling of them to remain the whole year. I have in my collection a couple of woodcocks' eggs, found in Inchtavanach a few springs ago.

The evening flight of the woodcock is rather earlier than the wild-duck's. The shrill chirp of the blackbird is a good signal when to expect them. This chirpy scream of the blackbird generally begins a little before dusk; the woodcocks fly about dusk, and the ducks a little after. In a good place for evening flight, you may generally secure four or five fair chances at woodcock. A few cocks come to the coverts again in March, immediately before taking their final departure. As the ground is then soft, and plenty of worms, &c., are to be found in every part of it, they are not so apt to frequent moist places; and may, in fact, be flushed in any part of the coppice. It is, therefore, scarcely worth while to beat for them.

Numbers of the mire-snipe breed among the heather on our moors, and afford no small amusement to the grouse-shooter. I have often bagged four or five couple in a day, when after grouse; merely picking them up as they came in the way. The young are constantly met with in all stages of progress—from the downy ball of a few days old, to the scarcely fledged bird, essaying its first tottering flight.

Jacks come in September, but are more local in their habits. They are found in considerable plenty on many of our more marshy moors. It is very amusing to witness the attempts of an indifferent shot at jack-snipes in such open ground. They are easily found by a good dog, as they have a strong scent; and, being close-lying birds, they generally spring within a yard of the sportsman's toes; who at last wishes his teasing game far enough, when a heroic jack doggedly offers another chance. A good shot will hit a jack even more certainly than a mire-snipe.

In bare ground, I have frequently noticed both mire and jack snipes squatted before my dog's nose. Once I plainly saw the point of a mire-snipe's bill stuck in the ground, ready to hoist him into the air. I watched narrowly, and, in taking wing, he used his long bill exactly as we would a walking-stick. Snipes have the same predilection for a particular spot as woodcocks. One severe winter, my retriever sprung a mire-snipe out of a puddle, close to the Gala water. It flew across the stream, and I fractured the tip of its wing just when it reached the other side. It fell among thick furze, and we were unable to find it. Next day my retriever picked it up at the same ditch, unable to fly a yard. It could only have recrossed the Gala by swimming.

While speaking of the covert, I shall make one quotation from a periodical about battue-shooting, which entirely coincides with my own ideas: "The battue is a bastard sport, an attempt to graft foreign customs on good English pastimes. It is only fitted for the emasculated creatures who have not sense or stamina enough to endure a day's toil in the legitimate pursuit of beasts and birds, whom nature seems to have designed for the purpose of testing the skill and resolution of men in the pursuit and capture of them."

LOCH-FISHING

The true angler is almost always a lover of nature; if not, he loses half the pleasure of his art. In following the river's course, he must of necessity pass through the finest and most varied scenery; and that, too, at a time when beauty crowns the year. But, enchanting as are the woodland banks of the quiet stream, there is to me a higher and yet more powerful charm in the solitary wildness or savage grandeur of the Highland loch. The very *stillness* of those bare hills and craggy summits, broken only by the rushing of some rapid burn that intersects them, has a tendency to elevate, while it calms the mind; and I envy not the man who could frequent such scenes and not feel them.

But if the proficient in the gentle craft has an eye equally keen to the beauties so lavishly scattered around him, it happens no less often that the admirer of nature's wildest charms fancies himself an angler. Our man of taste has, perhaps, fished a few rivers near him, in the spring, when trout are lean and hungry; and, having chosen a propitious day, has sometimes returned with a tolerable creelful. He then starts on his pleasure-tour, and of course his fishing-rod forms an important accompaniment. At first he makes some determined attacks upon the finny tribe; but, being generally unsuccessful, his rod is laid aside, and, after having been delighted with the sublimities and beauties of half the Highlands, he returns home with but an indifferent account of his piscatorial achievements. To such an one I particularly address the few simple directions in loch-fishing, which time and patience have enabled me to collect.

There are particular times in every season when trout more readily take in many of the Highland lochs, and these it should be the angler's first study to discover. For instance, the best time for trolling with the minnow, in Loch Vennachar, is from the end of February to the middle of May, when large fish may be taken. They never rise well at the fly in this loch. In Loch Lomond, the trolling does not begin till May, and only lasts till the middle of June, when the fly-fishing commences. More may then be caught, but, with the exception of sea-trout, seldom nearly so large as with the minnow. In Loch Katrine, you may troll with success all the season. The fishing in Lochs Earn, Lubnaig, and Voil is not good till May: the trout in these lochs being small, they are never trolled except for the gillaroo, which inhabits them all, and sometimes grows to a great size. The trouting in Loch Ard is best at an early part of the year, falling off very much as the season advances; while Lochs Chon and Dhu, not so good as Loch Ard at the beginning of it, are much better afterwards. In short, a number of the lochs in the Highlands may, at certain times, be either fly-fished or trolled with greater success. There are also some which may be fished either way throughout the season; the angler's judgment determining which, as wind, water, and sky suggest. These, if inhabited by pike, are my particular favourites, especially when the greater part of the shore is so clear of weeds as to make one independent of a boat.

Many people think a loch injured by pike: on the contrary, unless very numerous, as in Loch Menteith, I have seldom seen one much worth fishing without them; always excepting those where the Loch Awe trout or gillaroo are to be found. If a man prefers killing eight or nine dozen, with scarcely a half-pounder among them, to a dozen fine trout from half-a-pound to three pounds weight, then he may count the pike his enemy; but the latter feat will both better prove his skill and afford him much greater sport. He who wishes to excel in angling will leave the loch with its tiny multitude to the bungler, and select the other, where all his science will be called into play.

The reason why yellow trout are always large where there are pike is obvious: the small fry are all devoured by the latter, and the others, having more food, increase in size. A few years ago, Loch Katrine was choke-full of very small trout, which have gradually become larger since pike have been introduced; and now two or three dozen fine red trout may be taken in a day.

There are two other small lochs near Loch Katrine which breed very large pike, and are full of prime trout, Loch Arklet and Loch Dronkie—but they are less fortunate than their neighbours in not having been immortalised by our Great Minstrel. The latter especially, from its ill-sounding name, we cannot wonder that a poet discards; but an angler will find its attractions. The shores of these lochs being almost clear of weeds, and the ground firm, the best parts may be reached by wading, and fish taken from half-a-pound to three pounds weight. Upon one occasion, when playing a good-sized trout in Loch Dronkie, an enormous pike made several dashes, and at last succeeded in seizing it. I used every effort to frighten him away; but so determined was he, that, though I could see him quite plainly in shallow water, with my trout held across his tremendous jaws, he would not be beat off; and at last, when kicking the water I strained my line, he gave a plunge, broke my rod, and escaped with his prey.

FLY-FISHING

The flies I have generally found best for loch-fishing are a light-speckled or brown-mottled mallard wing, according to the day; reddish-brown mohair body, red hackle, and No. 7 hook, tied with yellow silk, for a trail; and a teal-wing, claret-colour mohair body, black hackle, and No. 6 hook, tied with orange or yellow silk, for a bob. If the loch is full and muddy, add a small thread of silver tinsel to the latter, and increase the size of both:

in large lochs, a green body is also very killing. In fishing a loch where the trout are small, diminish the size of your hook; even in river-fishing, I seldom use any but those I have named, only much smaller and without the mohair—adding a hare's-ear body and woodcock wing early in the season, and a mouse body and snipe wing at a later period.

Should the loch you are fishing contain sea-trout or salmon, ascertain from any good fisher in the neighbourhood what are the most killing flies, and tie them for yourself. Should you not be "up to this," *beg, borrow, or buy them from him.* In fishing with a long line, from a boat, let the trail be either a sea-trout or salmon-fly; but if throwing from shore, never use the latter except by itself. When a salmon rises, whether in a loch or a river, you may allow him a second or two longer than a trout. He may be *safely* permitted to turn before you strike. A two-handed rod, large reel with plenty of line, and the lightest tackle are necessary.

If the wind is so high as to cause decided waves upon one of these small lochs, you will succeed much better with the minnow-tackle than the fly; indeed, the best plan then is to troll for pike, with a par: they always take best in high wind, but are so capricious that you may have three runs in half-an-hour on one day, and perhaps not one in several apparently favourable days. High wind is prejudicial to fly-fishing in lochs where the trout are large, because it scatters them into unlikely places; and being, of course, much fewer in number than when small, you are not so apt to stumble upon them: the waves also prevent their seeing the fly so readily.

When there is a fine even breeze, immediately repair to the loch. Begin to fish those parts where the wind blows fairest from the shore; if you know the loch well, you have a great advantage. The trout have many feeding places, and shift from one to another with the slightest change of the wind. Near some one of these they generally keep watching the breeze, which blows them flies and insects. They are usually in companies—so when the angler hooks one, he should endeavour to get it away from the rest; he will then most likely rise another the next throw or two. He must keep a very sharp look-out for these places, and may generally detect them by the rising of the trout. They sometimes, but not so often, feed singly.

When a fish takes the fly, raise your arm with a sort of *indescribable* turn of the wrist: if this is done with a *jerk*, the fly is whipped away from the trout; but if omitted altogether, it will often make its escape, after feeling the hook. It is for want of knack in this particular that so many trout are lost after having risen to the fly. When you hook a good fish that never shows above water, but swims low with a dead heavy pull, be very cautious; it is most likely tenderly hooked, and, with the least strain upon the line, will break away.

The shore, in many parts of the lochs, is fringed with weeds, beyond which you may cast by wading. Should you hook a trout in such a situation, and not find an opening to lead it through, use every endeavour to keep it from the weeds: and when quite tired out, raise its head above water, and tow it rapidly over them. If you can reach beyond the weeds with your landing-net, the difficulty in a great measure ceases.

When salmon or trout spring out of the water, you may be sure that neither will *be so apt to rise to your fly*, whether in lochs or rivers.

THE MINNOW-TACKLE*

In fishing for trout with the minnow, I also prefer a moderate breeze, unless in bright sunshine, when more wind is necessary. Your tackle should be the very best single gut, dyed with strong tea, or anything to take the shine off; a No. 13 hook and two No. 8's tied back to back: two swivels are enough, and no lead on the line. Any one with the least knowledge of angling knows how to bait. The large hook enters the minnow's mouth and is brought out near the tail, which is curved in order to make it spin; one of the others is passed through its lips. A fly-top makes the minnow spin more lively, and is therefore preferable to a bait one: the rod-makers will say the reverse. In river-fishing, another branch and couple of small hooks fastened to the gut, and fixed in the minnow's side, are often used; but I do not recommend them for the lochs.

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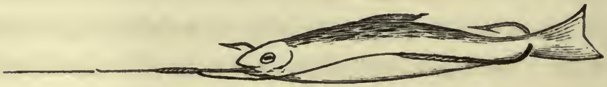
* It is very necessary to have wire-cages for par and minnow. By sinking the cages in the nearest burn, leaving the tops above water for air, and feeding the live bait with small worms, they will thrive for months. If the cages are placed in a loch or any still water, they are apt to die.

The best, though most tedious way of casting, is to gather the line with your right hand, and, letting the minnow hang down about a yard, throw it out, shifting the rod at the same time from the left hand to the right: you can thus make farther casts, and the minnow lasts twice as long. If the wind is high, try all the sheltered bays; you may then often hook a fish where you would otherwise have had little chance. Sink the minnow a few inches below the surface, and when you see or feel a bite, slacken your line a little: when you strike, it must be done with much more force than in fly-fishing.

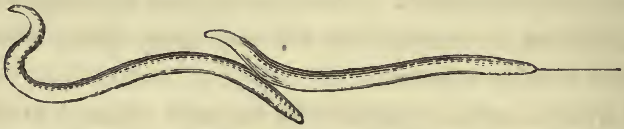
When trolling from a boat, the less the breeze the longer the line; sink it with lead to a considerable depth. In baiting, use a No. 9 hook through the minnow's lips, and a 13 or 14 through the tail (*vide* cut). You thus bait much more quickly, and the minnow's appearance is not so apt to be injured; its tail can also be curved up, more or less, to make it spin true. Thus baited, you may troll with it from a boat for half a day; but if you attempt to cast, it will very soon be thrown off. Always take with you two coarse trolling-rods that you do not mind sinking in the water, and very large reels with plenty of line—or oiled cord, if you wish.



Your boatman should be well acquainted with the ground; but if he is not, endeavour to troll between the shallow and the deep, where the trout are on the outlook. Find out if there are any sunk rocks or banks, and troll round them also. Always sweep past the mouths of any rivers or brooks; they are very likely places either with minnow or fly.

Troll as much as possible with the wind, although in fly-fishing it is best to row against it. Take care, when you hook a fish, that your boatman does not strain your line in the former case, nor slacken it in the latter; either of which he is apt to do, by lying upon his oars, watching your proceedings. You must, in fact, direct his slightest movement. When the waters are large and deep, such as Loch Lomond and Loch Awe, the heaviest fish are always taken by trolling with small trout, minnow, or par.

If the loch is frequented by salmon, have one of your rods baited with a par; and, if passing any of his haunts near the shore, take your fly-rod, land, and throw from it, but do not go near the place with the boat. Should no fish rise after you have thrown some time, take off your fly, put on a large bait-hook and two floats, one about six yards from the other; the line is thus prevented from dangling near the hook, which must hang down about four yards from the last float, baited with two large dew-worms in the following manner:—Enter the hook at the tail of one, and bring it out about one-fourth of an inch below the head; pull up the worm upon the gut; then put in the hook about one-fourth of an inch below the head of the other, leaving the same length of worm at the point—this moves about, and entices the salmon; pull down the first worm to the other, and your hook is baited. (*Vide* cut.)



When the float disappears, be in no hurry to strike till the fish has *tightened* the line; you are thus pretty sure of its head being turned away, and consequently have a better chance of hooking. This should only be attempted where the shores are deep and rocky, on a cloudy day, with a stiff breeze from the south or west, and skiffs of rain. Do not give up hope too soon, for the salmon are generally swimming in small shoals, backwards and forwards along the shore; a little time may thus elapse before they pass where you are fishing.

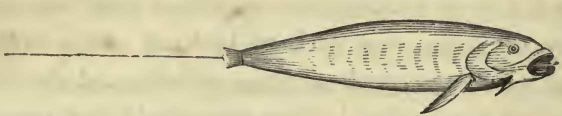
In trolling with par for Loch Awe trout, salmon, or the gillaroo, use double or even triple gut, well dyed; a couple of swivels are quite enough, and a very heavy lead. The manner of baiting, and best hook-tackle, have been already mentioned when treating of the salmo-ferox. Should the weather become calm, you may often hook a large cunning fish by waiting till dusk of evening, letting out a very long line, and sinking your rod in the water, with the butt against your shoulder. The biggest fish are always on the search for food at this time; and, perhaps, the most killing bait is a loach—also excellent for large perch, some of which I have caught, when trolling, fully three pounds weight.

TROLLING FOR PIKE

The common way of rod-fishing for pike in the Highlands is with a running-bait—a par, or small trout, and plenty of hooks, tied back to back on gimp, stuck all round it; also a couple of large swivels, and the line a little loaded with lead. They always take best mornings and evenings, except on very windy days; so, if the angler is inclined to try a cast for pike, after having filled his creel with trout, he may begin about six o'clock.

THE GORGE-TROLL

Trolling with the gorge is often very deadly in weedy lochs, especially small openings that cannot be fished with the running-bait. I have seldom, however, seen it used in Scotland, except in a very clumsy way—a large double hook, armed upon wire, with the bait inverted, and no attempt to make it spin; unless pike are in a very hungry mood, this is not very enticing. The proper gorge-hook is a small double one, commonly used for eels, with very sharp barbs, slightly turned inwards; the shank loaded with lead, in order to make the bait sink quickly, and enable you to make far casts with precision. This hook is fastened by a small brass ring to about a foot of gimp: (you require a baiting-needle:) after cutting off the tail and all the fins but one of the top side ones, hook on the loop of the gimp to the needle, and insert it at the mouth of the bait, bringing it out at the middle of the fork of the tail; the lead and shank of the hook will thus be hid in the mouth and belly of the bait, and only the barbs and points visible. Tie the tail to the gimp with thread. (*Vide* cut.)



After casting, let the bait sink to the bottom, then draw it to the top, and the single fin will make it spin beautifully. When a pike seizes, you must not be in hurry to strike, or you have small chance of hooking: let out your line with your hand; give him sufficient time to gorge the bait, and then he is fast and firm as you could wish. Use a coarse trolling-rod, with large strong rings, and reel of oiled cord: no swivel is required. Some use a large gaudy fly for pike; I never do so, and do not recommend it, though I have sometimes caught small pike even with a common trout-fly.

It is much more easy to find out the haunts of pike than those of trout. The best places are in and near the weedy bays. Fish all these with the running-bait, and, if possible, by wading, cast immediately beyond the weeds, between the shallow and the deep water; this, however, the sinking mud will often prevent your accomplishing. If you have found the pike on the feed, you may return over the same ground with the gorge, trying all the openings among the weeds that you could not fish with the running-bait. I never troll for pike from a boat unless they cannot be reached any other way.

SET-LINES AND TRIMMERS FOR PIKE

Although rod-fishing for pike affords undoubtedly the best sport, and requires much greater skill, yet by far the most deadly way is with set-lines. This is either done with a long line, and from twelve to twenty hooks, or with single hooks, fixed to a bottle or other equally buoyant float, called a trimmer. I have also heard of tying baited hooks to the legs of geese, and turning them adrift: when a pike seizes the bait, the goose begins to flap its wings, and there is often considerable sport in the struggle; but it is certainly a most cruel diversion, especially if a large pike is hooked. The humane man will be more amused with the trimmer, which I have often practised with great success.

After very tightly corking up the bottles, and fastening the cord to them, let from two to eight feet hang down, according to the depth of the water; fix a large double pike-hook, armed upon brass wire, and baited with a small perch, trout, roach, or frog to each: be sure to cut off the perch's dorsal fin and lower part of the gills. The baits are inverted, the barbs of the hook projecting from their mouths. The best time for this amusement is on one of those delicious evenings with scarcely a breath of air, when the shadow of the mountain becomes more imposing on the unrippled loch, and twilight begins to steal over the scene. Let the hum of the beetle be your warning bell.

Having arranged all your tackle, and baited your hooks, place them *regularly* in a light two-oared boat, and row to the weedy bay. You will now drop them one by one, about twenty yards apart, outside the weeds, between the shallow and the deep.* The pike have been basking all the sultry day in the shallows, and are just emerging from their green covering in search of food. The first object that arrests their hungry eyes and craving stomachs is your tantalizing bait, suspended at such a distance from the surface as to excite no apprehension, and perfectly still. With avidity it is seized and pouched; down goes the bottle; scarcely, perhaps, has it disappeared, when another follows its example; it is nothing uncommon to have four or five all bobbing up and down at the same time. The sport now begins, the angler stretching to his oars, first after one, then another, as they alternately rise and sink. If large pike are hooked, they will often keep their tormentor under water for a minute at a time; and *to run the whole down* is no contemptible evening's exercise.

THE LONG-LINE FOR PIKE

In setting a long-line for pike, fix branches of small whip-cord to it, about a yard in length, and three yards apart from each other; the same hooks as described above appended to them, and baited in the same way. The line is set in a like situation to the floats, in the following manner:—After driving a pole into the mud, fasten the end of your line to it. Your companion will now row leisurely along, whilst you lift out hook after hook, until you come to the end of the line; having done so, fix it to another pole, and drive this also into the mud. Do not make the line too "taught," or it will not hang low enough for the pike; no floats are required. The line may remain all night, and has thus the morning and evening chance.

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* Sometimes, when the water is unconfined, it is necessary to fasten the trimmers to prevent their floating away. Cut poles of about ten feet, fix a heavy stone, with a piece of twine longer than the depth of the water, to one end, and the trimmer with another piece of twine to the other end of the pole, which lies flat on the top of the water and prevents the fastening-line from dangling near the bait.

EELS

As lines for eels are of course set at the bottom, a short description of the way to do so may be necessary. Fasten a stone to the end of the line, to which also append a branch with a float—the same at the other end; the line thus lies flat upon the ground, the floats showing exactly where. Eels may be set for in rather deeper places than pike; but be sure there is a soft muddy bottom. Both hooks and baits must be a great deal less than when setting for pike, the former armed upon strong wire. Cut the fish, or whatever you bait with, into small pieces, just large enough to cover the hook, and fix them firmly on. I recollect catching five or six beautiful eels at one haul, with no other bait than two frogs; the legs set upon some of the hooks like worm, and the bodies, cut into several pieces, for the others. The drawing of an eel-line, what with twisting and slime, is often sorry work ; if a large swivel was appended to each hook, it would both tend to prevent this and increase the chance of success. It is of little use to set single hooks for eels, as the great likelihood is that the first that comes may have a mouth too small for sucking in your hook, *but large enough to devour your bait ;* in fact, there are twenty small for one large ; and from a line of three dozen hooks, it is a very good night's work to kill half-a-dozen large eels.

I have thus given an outline of the different kinds of fishing in fresh-water lochs except perch, which *float and worm recreation*, as it has come under the ban of Dr Johnson, I might leave the novice to find out for himself. All he has to do is to ascertain their haunt, which any one in the vicinity can show ; fasten a float to his line, and a No. 10 hook ; bait with an earth-worm ; throw in without art ; and give the fish time to gorge the bait before striking, or it may slip out of its capacious mouth after being sucked in.

FISHING ON SALT-WATER LOCHS

The sea-loch has a character peculiarly its own—no wooded islands, no green or pebbly margin, like its inland sister, except perhaps for a short time at full-tide; and the dark mountain more often rises abruptly from its side in craggy and bold relief. It is a novel sight for the traveller, whom the refreshing evening breeze has tempted out of the neighbouring inn, at the landlord's recommendation, to try his fishing-luck with such a clumsy rod and tackle as he had never dreamt of before. The awkward-looking herring "skows," well matched with their black or red sails, scudding in all directions; the nasal twang of the Gaelic, as they pass the bow or stern of his boat, shooting their nets; the hardy, weather-beaten face of the Highlander, always civil in his reply, and courteous in pointing out the most likely ground to the "stranger"—reiterating his injunctions (when his stock of English extends no further) "to keep on the *broo*," yet plainly showing that he expects the like courtesy in return, and that the least slip on your part would immediately make him change his tone,—all this can hardly fail to impress on the mind of the imaginative, that the spirit of the Highlands, though dormant, is not dead, and to carry back his fancy to the old times of clans, catarans, and claymores.*

The fishing of the sea-loch is not nearly so scientific as that of the inland. The great art lies in being thoroughly acquainted with the best state of the tide for commencing operations—in having a perfect knowledge of the fishing ground, and being able to set your long line with neatness and despatch. Having lived for a couple of years on the banks of two sea-lochs, I had every opportunity (which I did not neglect) of practising the different kinds of fishing, and making myself master of the most propitious times of the tide for doing so with success.

TROLLING FOR SEA-TROUT

May be ranked at the head of this fishing; but, before attempting to describe it, I shall mention two curious facts relative to the sea-trout and salmon, which it is difficult to account for. One is, that the former will take greedily in one loch, while you may troll a whole day in its next neighbour, though full of them, without getting a single bite. This was precisely the case in the two lochs alluded to. The other, that, although you may see the huge tails and back-fins of salmon rising all round, I never heard of one taking the bait; and during the whole of my trolling in the salt water, I have only killed one grilse. This is the more strange, as the salmon is not at all shy of the spinning-bait in the fresh-water loch.

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* It is often amusing to see how easily the warm blood will boil, even in those whom years and hardship might have cooled. The following characteristic instances occur to me:—A spruce young gentleman and party of friends, in crossing a ferry, had only one boatman, nearly eighty years old, tugging away at both oars. The young spark, who rather piqued himself upon his performance, offered to relieve him of one. "Na, na," says old Donald, whose manner was the extreme of respect, "ye'll no be accustomed to this wark." "Me!" says the youngster, "I'll row any man in your country." The Highlander instantly faced him with a look and tone of perfect equality,—"I've seen the day when ye wad hae been sair pushed!" The other case was that of an old "grannie" in defence of her rights and

The best time to begin fishing for sea-trout is at the turn of the tide, when it begins to ebb: the same rod and tackle as when trolling from a boat in fresh water. The herring-fry, salted, are the most killing bait, (also excellent for large fish in fresh-water lochs,) although minnows are very good: a sand-eel may also do, the black skin pulled over the head, so as to show nothing but the white body; this shines very bright, but, as it does not spin, is far less deadly than the others. A boatman who thoroughly

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privileges:—An efficient and benevolent magistrate, who had been very active in his endeavours to stop the progress of the cholera, was inculcating the necessity of cleanliness. Grannie listened with a sort of half-consenting air, which seemed to say—"we must submit to all this for the good that's to come"—until he mentioned the necessity of removing the dunghill from before the window. Her Highland blood could not endure so audacious an inroad upon her freedom: she determined to make a stand upon this odoriferous ground, proverbial for inspiring even the craven with pluck. With an attitude of defiance, and her fists firmly stuck in her sides, she bawled out—"Deed, Major, ye may tak our *lives*, but ye'll no tak our *midden!!*"

knows the fishing-ground is indispensable, as it is much more difficult to find out than in the fresh water. Strong eddies, formed by the tide, are often good places; also any bays, especially if mountain-burns run into them. The largest size of sea-trout are caught in this way; and when hooked, from the depth and *strength* of the water, make capital play. Large lythe also are frequently taken: these are like passionate boxers—fight furiously for a short time, after which they are quite helpless.

If there is a good pool at the mouth of any mountain burn, by going with your fly-rod during a "spate," or coming down of the water after heavy rain, *and when the tide is at the full*, you may have excellent sport. The trout are all floundering about, ready to take your fly the moment it touches the water. This only lasts for a short time, as they all leave the pool at the receding of the tide. I say nothing of sea-trout or salmon flies, which vary so much in the different lochs, rivers, and streams, that every angler should be able to dress them for himself. Any fishing-tackle maker will be happy to teach him *for a consideration.* He has then only to learn from an approved hand near what flies are best for the loch or stream he intends to fish, and tie them accordingly.

THE LONG-LINE

The eel-line, already noticed, is precisely the long-line in miniature, with the exception of the hooks, which are such coarse blunt-looking weapons, that the wonder is how they catch at all. They are sold for a mere trifle at any of the shops in the sea-port towns, and tied on with a wax end, but sometimes only with a knot of the twine itself: a turn of the wire on the shank enables you to do this. A baiting basket is required, one end for the line, the other for the baited hooks, which are placed in regular rows. My line had only three hundred hooks, but some have double that number. Herring, cut into small pieces, are the best bait: I required about a dozen for one setting, provided I eked out with mussels, but eighteen or twenty were necessary if the line was baited exclusively with herring. Mussels, however, drop off the hook so easily, that when herring can be procured they are seldom used. Seeing the long-line baited, set, and drawn, will thoroughly teach any one who has an idea of fishing—*writing* how to do so never will. It generally took me about an hour and a half to bait mine; so I taught a boy, who, after two or three lessons, could bait as well as myself.

The best time to set the long-line is after low water, when the tide has flowed a little, and brought the fish with it. To know the different "hauls"* is most important, as your success in a great measure depends upon the selection of a good one. After the line is set, *it should be left exactly one hour;* and, if you have hit upon a shoal, you will most likely half fill the boat. I have several times killed about a dozen, from twenty to fifty pounds weight, besides quantities of smaller. The fish for the most part taken are cod, ling, haddock, skate, large flounders, and enormous conger-eels, some of the latter more than half the length of your boat, and as thick as a man's leg. These would generally be thrown back again, were it not for the havoc they make among the other fish, and the damage they do to the set-lines. Their throats are, therefore, cut as soon as they are pulled up, after which operation they will live for hours. The skate is also very tenacious of life; and nothing can be more absurd than the grotesque pompous faces it will continue to exhibit for some time after being deposited in the boat. The round shape of its jagged crown is exactly like a judge's wig; and when it puffs out its cheeks, the whole face and head so forcibly remind one of those learned lords, that you almost fancy you hear it pronouncing sentence upon the devoted congers. The conger, if dressed like other fish, is uneatable; but when the oil is taken out, by parboiling, some people prefer it to cod. Care should be taken to untwist the line as much as possible when drawing it, which saves a deal of trouble afterwards. There is generally so much filth and discomfort in the whole business, that gentlemen seldom care to engage in it, except a few times from curiosity.*

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* Banks, and parts of the loch, where the shoals of fish congregate.

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* Thunder is generally believed to be destructive to fishing of all kinds —and so it often is. I, however, know an instance, when a friend of mine set his long-line just before a tremendous storm, which raged the whole hour it was in the water. As soon as it cleared, he rowed to his line, with no hope of success for that day: to his astonishment it was perfectly loaded with heavy fish. Something similar happened to myself, when going to fish the Almond, near Edinburgh. I was overtaken by a thunder-storm when close to the river; directly upon its subsiding, I commenced fishing, and at the second or third throw hooked a fine trout. After a few hours I returned home, having had excellent sport.

THE HAND-LINE

When a boy, I used to be much delighted with the hand-line, and never failed to practise it as opportunity offered. It is simply a piece of whalebone fastened cross-wise to the line, and a hook at each end, tied upon strong gut, with a heavy lead in the centre. This lead sinks the line rapidly to the bottom, which it no sooner touches than you feel it strike. You are thus enabled to keep moving the hooks a yard or two up, and then sink them to the ground again, which entices the fish. All the art of the hand-line is to pull up *the instant* you feel a bite, and never to slacken (unless to play a large one) till the fish is safe in the boat. Keep changing your ground, and dropping your anchor, unless the fish seem taking. Mussels are the best bait; and it is a good plan to throw a few into the water, as well as the empty shells.

Hand-line fishing may be followed at any time, but is best at the flow of the tide. As the water retires, shift your position further down the loch, and *vice versâ*. Almost every cottage on the banks can supply a hand-line, and every inmate knows how to use it.

THE WHITE FEATHER

To some *highly facetious* authors, a pun upon the white feather might prove a prize, so I shall make them a present of it instead of my readers, and proceed to its dressing and use. Of all apologies for a fly, this is the clumsiest; it is only a swan's or goose's feather tied round a large and very coarse bait-hook, without the least pretence to art; any man who had never dressed a fly in his life would be as successful in the attempt as the most finished performer.* The rod and line are in perfect keeping with the fly; a bamboo-cane, or young hazel-tree, with ten or twelve yards of oiled cord, and a length or two of double or triple gut next the hook: no reel is used.

The fish generally caught in this way are lythe and seithe, although mackerel will rise freely also; when fishing for the former, good double gut may be strong enough, but if large fish are expected, I should always recommend triple. Seithe take best in the morning and evening, and a slight breeze is rather an advantage: although the fly is sometimes sunk a little with lead, it is more often fished with at the top. You may begin at any state of the tide, and row over all the sunk banks and places where the fish frequent, at a slow rate, with three or four rods placed regularly in the stern of the boat.

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* Worsted is occasionally used instead of the feather, and it is sometimes a killing way to have a different colour for *each* rod—viz., white for one, yellow for another, and red for a third. This last is best for mackerel; and in some states of the water and sky, both lythe and seithe, especially the former, prefer the yellow to the white. It is a curious fact regarding the seithe, that when it grows old it changes both its nature and appearance; the colour is nearly black instead of the rich green; it grows to a great size, and gains a formidable set of teeth. It is then called a stanlock, or black salmon, and is quite as destructive to other fish as the conger-eel. In this stage it is never known to rise to the fly, but it is occasionally taken by the hand or long-line.

When a small seithe is hooked, pull it in at once, and out with the rod again as fast as possible: sometimes nearly all the rods have a fish at the same time. In lythe fishing you need not launch your boat till low water; sink the fly with a couple of buck-shot, and troll on the brow, where it descends perpendicularly; this is easily seen at that state of the tide. When you hook a large fish, try to prevent it getting down, or you may be obliged to throw the rod overboard, in case the lythe should break away; but, if you can manage to swing it about at the top for a short time, it will soon be unable to offer any resistance.

Trolling with the white feather has this recommendation, that it may be enjoyed by an invalid or party of ladies—and, certainly, a more delightful way of spending the cool of a summer evening cannot be imagined: rowing slowly along those romantic shores—hearing the distant gurgle of the dwindled mountain-brook in its steep descent, and ever and anon passing the blue curling smoke of a shepherd's or fisherman's grass-topped hut upon the banks.

I have now, I think, given all the *necessary* instructions in fresh-water and sea-loch fishing; and feel confident that, by following them, the admirer of "flood and fell," even if a beginner in angling, may return from his fishing tour, having as often filled his creel from their depths as gratified his taste with their scenery.

THE MOOR-BURN

I DON'T know whether the moor-burn more properly belongs to the moor or the loch; but, as it begins in the one and ends in the other, it was rather an omission on my part to have left it out in my first edition, especially as at certain times of the year it affords excellent sport to the angler who penetrates the wilds.

When in ordinary trim, the moor-burn is generally neglected by the finished adept, as a more fitting amusement for the school-boy during his summer holidays; and certainly nothing can be easier than to kill a basketful of burn-trout at such a season. To do this in as short a time as possible, treat them with earth-worms baited upon a smallish hook. They will rise well at the fly, but the worm is more deadly. As you have often queer-looking places to scramble up, where a longer and smarter turn-out would be sadly in the way, use a coarse short rod, very small reel, and casting-line of good single gut. I have generally been most successful when the burn was small, the trout being then eager for worms, having tasted few since the last flood. The great point at such a time is to keep out of sight, by dropping the bait over a rock, or from behind a bush or tuft of heather. There is generally sufficient motion in these rocky streams to prevent your line from being seen by the trout, and they will seize the bait with such avidity that I have sometimes, when a boy, taken a dozen out of one pool or *lyn*, as they are called. Many prefer the burn a little swollen, and in this state it is certainly easier for the unscientific craftsman, who is then much less likely to be observed by the trout. But would he take proper care to conceal himself, he would not only find them more greedy when the burn is small, but would be better able to detect their usual haunts, which they are very apt to leave when the water rises. When the lyns are black, and whirl round in eddies, let the bait humour the water; in fact, the only art in fishing them is to make the worm appear naturally to follow the course of the stream. When again the burn flows over *level ground*, lengthen your line, as you have there more difficulty in keeping out of sight. Fish all the streams and deep-looking places, and, if need be, don't grudge to crawl to them on hand and knee, or you will often be detected by the quick-sighted trout when the water is clear. To fish the moor-burn in this way is capital practice for the novice in angling; with a little attention, he will seldom return with an empty creel. In the Balnaguard burn, which runs into the Tay near Logierait in Perthshire, I killed nine dozen and two in a few hours. I tried the burn by the advice of an old gardener, who told me he had one day killed nine dozen in it himself. So having equalled him, with two to spare, I washed my hands of bait-fishing during the rest of my sojourn on the banks of the Tay.

Of trout so caught, not above one in fifty averages a quarter of a pound. But there is another manner of fishing the deep lyns and rocky eddies, which is difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, except for a steady head and practised hand. Yet if love of adventure should entice the angler to try it, he will be rewarded by larger trout, and perhaps a heavier creel.

In most of the small Highland burns, there is a succession of cataracts and pools, with a parapet of rock rising perpendicularly on each side, and often scarcely footing enough for a dog to pass. The greater proportion of picturesque-looking *brethren of the angle* would almost start at the idea of continuing their pastime under such disadvantages. They therefore make a circuit, and come down again upon the burn, where it is more easy to fish, and the ground less rugged. The trout in these places are thus left till many of them grow large, and each, taking possession of a favourite nook, drives all the smaller fry away. The difficulty of reaching these places is, I admit, often great, the angler sometimes having to scramble up on his hands and knees, covered with wet moss or gravel, and then to drag his fishing-rod after him. These lyns should always be fished up stream, otherwise, the moment you appear at the top of the waterfall or rock, the trout are very likely to see you, and slink into their hiding-place. The burn, however, must always be low, as at no other time can you distinguish the snug retreat of these little tyrants—which indeed they often leave, during the slightest flood, in search of prey. By fishing up the stream, your head will be on a level with the different eddies and pools, as they successively present themselves, and the rest of your person out of sight. Hold the baited hook with the left hand, jerking out the rod, under-handed, with your right, so as to make the bait fall softly at the lower end of the pool. The trout always take their station either there or at the top where the water flows in, ready to pounce on worms, snails, slugs, &c. as they enter or leave the pool. Should a trout seize the bait, a little time may be given to allow it to gorge, which it will most likely do without much ceremony. If large, care must be taken to prevent it from getting to the top of the lyn, which may probably harbour another expectant. The best plan is, if possible, to persuade it to descend into the pool below.* Having deposited the half-pounder in your creel, you will now crawl upon hands and knees, just so near the top of the lyn as will enable you to drop the bait immediately below the bubbling foam—nearly as favourite a station for an over-grown monopolising trout as the other. Except in such situations, the burn-trout seldom exceeds a quarter of a pound, and may be pulled out with single gut, without much risk of breaking it. In these lyns, however, I have occasionally taken them upwards of a pound, which is easily accounted for. As soon as the trout grows to a sufficient size to intimidate his pigmy neighbours, he falls back into the best pool for feeding, not occupied by a greater giant than himself, and as these lyns are almost always in precipices very difficult of access, he remains undisturbed and alone, or with a single companion, driving all others away, until he may at last attain to a pound weight.

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* In fishing a small pool, where you have reason to think the salmon have congregated, the same method ought to be adopted. When you hook one, tumble him over out of the pool down stream; at all events, prevent him, if you possibly can, from disturbing the throat, where there may be some more. If the fish are at all tractable when first hooked, several may in this way be taken out of the same pool; whereas by fishing down stream, should a salmon be hooked at the throat of the pool, he will so frighten the others that very probably no more may rise.

I have seen two curious instances of the rapid growth of the burn-trout under such circumstances, from the size of a par to fully half a pound. They were deposited in separate spring-wells, about three feet deep and five round. The trout in neither had any means of escape, and became so tame as to seize worms, minnows, &c. when dropped from the hand. One of them was within a hundred yards of Arden Connel house in Dumbartonshire, where I then lived. It had been in the spring about four years, and although large-headed and lean-looking, as all overgrown burn-trout are, seemed in good health and *spirits*. It always came to the top of the water for the remains of my minnows, when I returned from trolling; and on one occasion I emptied a pailful of live ones into the spring, which not only gave it several hearty meals, but exercise and amusement to boot. It pursued and seized them with a rapidity the eye could scarcely follow. At last the poor minnows, from several dozen, decreased in number to three or four, who only escaped the fate of their companions by discovering a small crack between two stones; and I noticed that the trout soon ceased to molest them, having discovered that the attempt would be vain, as they always kept close to their refuge. This trout, I believe, is still alive, but the other, I have heard, is dead, after a solitary existence in the spring of nine years' duration!

But to return to the burn. Although when small or in ordinary trim the angler must be content with its common inmates, yet the time to fish it in perfection is during the floods at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. The sea-trout, salmon, and grilse then come up in great numbers. To select the proper moment for commencing operations is the great point. Many of the smaller burns remain in proper trim for so short a time that the angler ought to be waiting at the side, ready to begin fishing as soon as the white muddy water has run out, and the burn assumes the deep red tinge. After it decreases to a certain point, he will hardly rise a single fish. Nay, he would even stand a better chance *before* the water is sufficiently clear, with an enormous gaudy fly, with which, should he come half-an-hour too soon, he may amuse himself until it is time to put on the proper ones.

As I have already said, every experienced angler is well aware how capricious are the salmon, sea-trout, and grilse of different streams as to their flies. I was in the habit of fishing sea-trout in three burns in the same neighbourhood, (two of them running into the same sea-loch,) each of which had its favourite fly. I often put on the chosen three, and fished them all in turn; but invariably, when the water was in *its best state*, the fish in each were most constant to their own fly. I merely mention the fact without attempting to account for it, and will name the flies to show that the difference was considerable: one was a yellow and green, or red and green body, red hackle, and either teal or light-speckled mallard-wing; another, a blue body, red hackle, and turkey-wing; and the third (for the burn which ran into a different loch) a green body, thread of gold tinsel, red hackle, and dark mottled mallard wing. The second-mentioned of these flies, with the addition of an orange tuft, is the best that can be used for salmon on the Tweed, if the water is in its ordinary state; and by lessening the hook as the river decreases, you may continue to kill fish with it when the water is so small that they will not look at any other.*

As to the most killing flies for particular burns, it is impossible that any rule can be given; this is a point which one's own observation, or the information of adepts in the neighbourhood, alone can decide. But supposing

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* The best turkey feathers for the wings of salmon and sea-trout flies are those with the smallest spots,—very difficult to procure; and nothing can stand a comparison with the forked tail of the kite, when a red-brown wing is required for salmon.

Flies for salmon ought to be fastened to the gut in a different manner from any others—viz., with a small loop of double or triple gut, through which the length of gut is passed and tied with a double knot. You may them chosen, we will now proceed to throw them. If unacquainted with the burn, you should never pass over the streams, eddies, &c. when it first runs clear; and as it decreases in size pay most attention to the pools. If the "spate" or flood has not been very heavy, the fish will soon refuse to rise at all. It is then that a man who knows the water will often kill a fish or two, when perhaps an angler equally expert, but without this advantage, would stand little chance. I once in this way astonished a fellow-craftsman, no mean performer either. I was at the burn-side just at the proper moment, and having fished the best of the water, was about to return after killing a couple of fine sea-trout, when I saw a rival, with whom I was unacquainted, trotting down to the bank. His first salutation was, "Are the fish rising?" He then desired to see my flies, being a stranger to the burn. As he seemed what is called "a *greedy* angler," I thought it no harm to take a *rise* out of *him*. The water by this time was long past its best; so, after supplying him with a fly, I said I would not interfere, but walk down and show him the casts. He was evidently a good fisher, but, as I anticipated, did not kill a fish, and only rose one. In the burn there was one very strong eddy, where the trout never rose to the fly, but where I seldom missed taking

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thus fish always with good strong single gut, next the hook, cutting it off and making a fresh knot whenever it chafes at the shank. This method, of course, will not be very strenuously recommended at the fishing-tackle maker's, as, by the usual way, the fly is of no more use when the gut cracks or chafes close to the hook, which, unless double, or even triple, it will soon do.

one with the worm, when the water was at all swollen. On coming near this place, I said, "if he had done nothing it was not his fault, but that I would now try my luck." I then let him go a good way ahead, took off my flies, put on a bait-hook and worm, and from this place pulled out two whitlings half-a-pound weight. I then whipped on my flies again, and overtook him at the end of the burn. I could hardly keep my gravity at his astonished face when I showed him my success. He never suspected the bait, and I soon took my leave, wishing him better sport the next spate!

Sea-trout, after the burn has run small, will never rise to the fly; they fall back to the pools, and, as anglers say, *stick to the bottom*, where they may often be seen. At such times they are also very unwilling to take a bait, and the only chance is to try both pools and streams with the minnow *after it becomes nearly dark.* I recollect once, when the water was quite dwindled, taking a very fine one with worm; but although I have often tried the same pools before and since, never with success. I had been fishing a small moor-loch in company with another angler, and thought of returning home by the burn, and trying the steep lyns with bait for a sea-trout. My companion laughed at the idea, saying, that to catch one then was totally out of the question. I thought the same, but having plenty of time, resolved to make the attempt; so, selecting one or two of the largest pools, where the rocks on each side rose perpendicularly, darkening the water, I gently and slowly let down the bait, allowing the worm, but no part of the line, to touch the water. After one or two attempts I hooked and killed a fine trout, fresh from the sea, and as white as silver. So small was the burn that he never even tried to get out of the pool, and my great difficulty was to scramble down the precipice in order to secure him. This trifling occurrence would not be worth mentioning, did it not serve to show that an angler always *has a chance*, however little he suspects it, if his energy and perseverance do not fail. Perhaps the following may be a still better instance of the efficacy of this latter qualification, when science and skill have been found unavailing. One of the fat lazy trout of the Thames, which I detected feeding near one of the locks above Henley Bridge, after refusing my artificial flies, a bleak, and a minnow, I hooked at last with a common *bee* sunk like worm, which I had intended for a chub, and happened to think might take his fancy ![*]

Having named the noble Thames, I cannot let him pass without a tribute, and, if I may be permitted, will offer a few hints on river-fishing, though not properly belonging to my subject. I have had nearly as much practice in the sluggish and muddy waters of the Lowlands as in the rapid and rocky Highland burns; and, if I cannot but prefer those to which early associations bind me, yet the pleasure of wandering along the green banks of the southern streams, as they sweep through the clovery meadow or the fringing copse, is perhaps increased by contrasting them with the grey rocks and purple hills of my country; while the laugh of the wood-pecker, the song of the nightingale, the "azure plume" of the little halcyon as he flits past on a calm summer's eve, are noticed with a more lively interest when substituted for the swoop of the eagle and the crow of the "gor-cock."

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[*] The above examples are not related for imitation, as they would probably be unsuccessful ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but merely to enforce the advantage of patience—the angler's good genius.

RIVER-ANGLING

My first advice to the beginner in river-fishing is to give himself little trouble about the old-fashioned descriptions and arrangement of flies, such as good old *Isaac* (unequalled in every other department) has so elaborately, and, I must say, so unnecessarily discussed. The *theory* of fly-fishing has been much simplified since his day, and a few directions as to its *practice* are all I think necessary to give. For the sake of illustration, I will take the Almond and Water of Leith near Colt Bridge, two streams well known to all Edinburgh anglers, and which also bear a strong resemblance to many of the English rivers. The trout in both these waters, especially the latter, are shy, well fed, and lazy; and here, if anywhere, one would imagine the whole absurd catalogue of artificial flies would be needed to tempt their dainty appetites. So far, however, from this being the case, I have never used more than three or four different kinds during the whole spring and summer, and was generally at least as successful as any of my numerous competitors.

These flies were the same as those I have mentioned under loch-fishing, only of course suiting the size of the hook to the nature and quality of the stream, whether it is much whipped over, &c. If the angler pleases, he may vary the mouse-body to the water-rat, which will make it a little darker for a bright day; and a bunting's is the best blae-wing he can use. When the water is very small, the mallard and teal-wings, for the sake of lightness, I have occasionally omitted, and fished with the flies as palmers. At Colt Bridge especially, the trout, from being constantly harassed with anglers, require very fine fishing. I have taken most of the fat heavy ones either with the mouse-body and snipe, or bunting-wing, or a small black palmer, hook an 0 or No. 1 at the largest. If the water should be rather swelled and discoloured, always use the mallard-wing and red hackle for the trail, and it is a good plan to clip off a piece of the shank of the hook before tying the fly. You may thus fish with a No. 2 as lightly as a 1, which is a great point in all still waters where the trout are shy.

To fish these deeps with success, the angler must not only be able to throw a long line most delicately, but also attain the art of making his fly alight within an inch of any given point, in order to take advantage of the rises of the trout. When the fly is dropped in the *centre of the ring*, *the instant after the trout has belled up*, it is ten times more likely to rise again than if the fly touched the water at ever so short a distance, even if thrown as lightly as possible and clearly seen by the fish. There is more art in this than most anglers are aware of. In dragging the cast, the gut should not cause the *slightest ripple;* to prevent which the flies must be sunk a little, and the motion slow. It is also very desirable to attain the knack of throwing well when trees are close behind you; as trout, especially in summer, are apt to harbour under them for the sake of the insects that are blown off into the water beneath.

There is often in summer a small black fly that keeps playing on the top of the water, and every now and then alighting for a moment, as if tempting its aquatic foe. When the angler sees this fly thus sporting with the jaws of death, let him always have a small black hackle on his cast. There is also another summer-fly which comes down upon the river in great numbers,—they keep all together, and hover about two or three inches above the surface. The trout follow them in shoals, and in the Almond I have seen half-a-dozen heads at a time darting up at the busy throng above. As these flies do not alight on the water even for an instant, the trout are all intent on seizing them *in the air;* and there being generally a dead calm where these insects congregate, your cast, though thrown ever so lightly, has more the effect of alarming than enticing the fish. It is most tantalising; but all that can be done is to take a few light casts now and then, *stopping whenever the trout cease to rise.* By this cautious proceeding, you may take one or two of the most greedy. When I have caught trout at such times, I have observed that they as often as not took the fly on the cast least resembling the insect.

It would be treason to doubt the omnipotence of the May-fly, whose reign, however, seldom begins in Scotland till June. The more ignorant the angler the more determined will he be to have the imitation on his cast when the natural fly is on the water. Well, let him,—it will kill, but whether better, either in May or June, than those I have named, let the man who can deftly throw them judge for himself. I was at one time as great a stickler for the May-fly as any one, but for the last few years have had none upon my cast, and never missed his company. I don't profess to be a theorist in my fishing, but have come to the conclusion that a few judicious shades from light to dark are quite sufficient when fishing with *small flies* for yellow trout, whether or not they take them for a known insect; and the least observant man, by having four of the flies I have mentioned on his cast, will soon find out whether light, dark, or medium is the order of the day.

When river-fishing, I never trouble myself with more tackle than three or four casts round my hat, each having a different trail—thus being able to fish with the fly *as trail*, which seems for the time the favourite. If unacquainted with the stream, it may be as well to have a few additional casts, with the hooks of different sizes.

In some very muddy waters, such as the Ale in Selkirkshire, (exactly the colour of its name,) a single thread of silver is recommended when fishing with a dark fly. I tried this, but found a red palmer quite as effective. No doubt, however, the tinsel is good in such a case, though I have seldom seen a river discoloured enough to require it.

Another hint to the young angler is to mind what he is about when he approaches the still deeps of the river. Many are apt to pass them by altogether, and scarcely try a cast until they come to the pools and streams again. Perhaps the best test of a finished performer is the manner in which he fishes these dead deep places, especially if there is little wind, for they generally harbour the largest and best-fed fish, which are, of course, the most suspicious and difficult to rise. We will suppose a first-rate angler approaching one of these unrippled deeps: his tackle is of the very lightest description—he is watching with a hawk's eye for the rising of a trout. Should he see one, he instantly moves up till within rather a distant cast of the place, taking advantage of any bush or tuft of reeds which may the better conceal him; or, if necessary, going down on his knee, ready to drop his cast, light as gossamer, right across the next circle, which the crafty fish may make by sucking down another incautious fly. If the trout should rise, he is not unlikely to be one well worth hooking, and to give good sport in such quiet water. When there is breeze enough to make much ripple, it may prevent any but a quick and practised eye from seeing the rises *most worth notice;* in which case the water should be fished with as long a line and as light casts as possible. You need not despair should trees or any other obstacle prevent your sweep from being so free as otherwise it ought, for if you are suitably dressed,* and make no rapid motions, you will be so masked by the trees or bushes as to allow of a much nearer approach and shorter cast. In the Water of Leith there are two pools a little way above the bridge, overshadowed by old trees, and much frequented by large heavy trout. There I have been often more successful than when my sweep was perfectly unencumbered; and I must be allowed to mention a curious circumstance which happened to me some years ago in one of these said pools. Having tied a cast rather hurriedly in the morning, I hooked a good fish upon my bob, a mouse-body and snipe-wing, when the single knot slipped. Two days after, when fishing the same place, I again hooked and killed a fine trout, upwards of a pound weight, and, to my astonishment, my own handiwork with two inches of gut was sticking in its lip. One of the fraternity, sedulously employed on the opposite bank, remarked, that "it must have been an honest trout, for it was not for want of temptation that he kept the hook for the right owner!" He also related a fact of the same kind which had happened a week or two before. A friend of his was fishing with minnow, when the tackle caught in a tree behind, and, not being able to reach it, he had broken the gut. Soon after, when some one was shaking the tree, to secure the tackle, it dropped off into the water, and, being slightly loaded with lead, immediately sank. Next day an eel was taken at a set line with a piece of gut hanging out of its mouth, and the very person who had lost the tackle being on the spot, it occurred to him that it might be his, which proved to be the case.

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* The slate-blue of the heron's back is the best colour for a fisher's dress.

The insensibility to pain, which an angler can scarcely fail to notice in these cold-blooded creatures, is a point which happily redeems from cruelty the necessary inflictions of his craft. I recollect catching three fine trout one evening when trolling on Loch Lomond with a friend, and we discovered hanging out of the mouth of one of them a strong hair line. On opening the fish, we found a large bait-hook fixed firmly in its stomach, the wicker and part of the hook being nearly digested. The creature had evidently been caught and broke away from a set-line, and, though hooked in so vital a part, not only took our bait greedily, and made a most capital fight for a quarter of an hour, but was in the very finest condition, having fattened on his hard fare, instead of wasting from torture.

The last hint I have to give on the still parts of the river is, that when the large trout refuse to rise, being sated with summer-flies, a *small* minnow about dusk is most likely to succeed.

With regard to the streams, and more rapid parts of the river, it certainly requires practice to find out the feeding-places of trout. There is always a good cast just where the water begins to steady itself, after falling and foaming over a ledge of rock,—also in the eddies caused by roots, stones, branches of trees, &c. An angler who loves his craft will very soon become knowing in this department, and will then find much less difficulty here than in the still deeps. Of course, the more rapid the water the less likely is the trout to observe either a fisher on the banks or his line, though perchance heavily thrown. But show me the man who can fish the *still* parts of the river with tact and science, and I will be answerable for the rest of his performance. As to wind, which most anglers make such a fuss about, although a moderate breeze is a *sine quâ non* in loch-fishing, and also an advantage to the clumsy craftsman on the river, yet if the water is in its best state, and the sun not very bright, a first-rate angler would rather have *too little* than *too much.*

The above observations apply equally to all the rivers and streams I have fished; and my practice has been in many parts of England, as well as in the north, south, east, and west of Scotland.

WILD-FOWL SHOOTING ON THE HIGHLAND LOCHS

The exciting nature of the winter shooting on one of our large Highland lochs, if well frequented by water-fowl, can hardly be conceived by a stranger to the sport. It, in fact, partakes so completely of the nature of deer-stalking, that a man who is an adept at the one would be sure, with a little practice, to be equally so at the other. I should have been astonished to find this amusement so little followed by gentlemen, had I not sometimes witnessed the bungling manner in which they set about it: it is, indeed, as rare to find a gentleman who knows anything of this sport as a rustic who has not a pretty good smattering of it. The reason is obvious. The squire, who may be a tolerable shot, is all eager anxiety until he can show off his right and left upon the devoted fowl; while the clod, having only his rusty single barrel to depend upon, and knowing that if the birds should rise, his chance is greatly lessened, uses all the brains of which he is master in order to get the sitting shot; and knowing also, from experience, that the nearer he gets to his game the better his chance, spares no trouble to come to close quarters. He will crawl for a hundred yards like a serpent, although he should be wet through, reckless of his trouble and discomfort if he succeed in his shot.

I will now suppose the squire by the loch-side on a fine winter morning, dressed perhaps in a flaring green or black velveteen, with a Newfoundland retriever of the same sable hue. He sees a flock of fowl well pitched on the shore, which most likely have seen both him and his dog, and are quite upon their guard. He looks round for a few bushes to screen him *when near* the birds; and then, with a sort of half-crouching attitude, admirably imitated by his canine friend, advances upon his game. Unless the place is particularly adapted for a shot, the flock have probably seen him appearing and reappearing several times, and whenever he is sufficiently near to alarm them, fly up together, to his no small chagrin. But should he *by any chance* get near enough for a shot, his dog, not being thoroughly trained, will most likely either show himself, or begin whimpering when his master prepares to shoot, or, in short, do something which may spoil the sport; and even supposing the better alternative, that he should have no dog at all, and be within shot of his game, he will, in all probability, either poke his head over a bush when going to fire, or make a rustling when putting his gun through it, and so lose the sitting shot.

Now for the few hints I have to offer. It may be thought that none were wanting, after the subject of wild-fowl shooting has been so well and fully discussed by Colonel

Hawker; but I have never seen any suggestions to assist the beginner how to proceed in the winter shooting on our large Highland lochs; and many a man may have it in his power to enjoy the recreation in this way, who has neither opportunity nor inclination to follow it in all its glory on the coast with a stanchion gun and punt.

The man who engages in this sport must be of an athletic frame and hardy habits: he must not mind getting thoroughly wet, nor think of rheumatism while standing or sitting in clothes well soaked, perhaps for an hour at a time, watching fowl. As to water-proof boots, they are totally out of the question: the common diker's boots would so impede your walking, and also be such a hindrance when crawling upon ducks or running upon divers, as considerably to lessen your chance; and the India-rubber boots would, in no time, become so perforated with briers and whin as to be of little more service than a worsted stocking. The most suitable dress is a light brown duffle shooting-jacket and waistcoat, as near the shade of the ground and trees in the winter season as possible, your great object being to avoid the quick sight of the birds; shoes well studded with nails, like a deer-stalker's, to prevent slipping, and a drab-coloured waterproof cap. Should the weather be very cold, I sometimes put on two pairs of worsted stockings, but never attempt any protection from the wet. If snow is on the ground, wear a white linen cover to your shooting-jacket, and another to your cap.

A gun suitable for this sport is indispensable. It certainly ought to be a double-barrel, and as large as you can readily manage; it must fit you to a nicety, and carry from two to three ounces of No. 3 or 4 shot, (I prefer the latter,) both very strong and regularly distributed. Its elevation must be most true; if anything, over-elevated. As to length of barrel, calibre, &c., every man will, of course, suit his own fancy, and give his directions accordingly. Should he not be *au fait* at this, by explaining the sort of gun he wants to any of the first-rate makers, he need not doubt their giving him satisfaction. Unless for geese or hoopers,* (when, of course, I would sacrifice my chance at other fowl,) I never use any shot larger than No. 4, as a fair chance at a small bird like a teal might be missed with larger; and a man should not go alarming the whole shore, firing random shots at flocks of fowl nearly out of reach on the water.

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* Except in the hardest winters, geese of any description seldom pitch upon the Highland lochs.

In the winter 1841, some flocks of the bean-goose appeared on Loch Lomond during the first storm. They remained about a week, and, when seen, were always feeding on the shores. Three of them my brother killed. I never knew this to occur before; for although wild-geese have occasionally pitched for a short time, they always chose the deep inaccessible places of the loch, and, after resting for a few hours, took their departure without attempting to feed. I went to the loch shortly after the geese had left it, but the thaw unfortunately began the next day; and of the five days I remained, it rained nearly three. I, however, bagged thirty-eight head of wild-fowl, mallards, golden-eyes, dun-birds, widgeon tufted and scaup-ducks—my charge never exceeding $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz. of shot. It was a curious fact that there were fewer hoopers that winter than in many of far less severity. Scarcely any came to Loch Lomond at all, and I did not see one, though I looked for them in all their most likely haunts. During the severe winter of 1837-8, not one wild-goose of any description was seen, although there were numbers of the common wild-swan, and a few of the black species, one of which was shot: so much for the uncertain movements of wild-fowl.

Next in importance to the gun is a proper retriever.* The Newfoundland is not quite the thing: first, his black colour is against him—brown is much to be preferred: then, I should wish my dog occasionally to assist me in this inland shooting, by beating rushes or thick cover up creeks, where you may often plant yourself in an open situation for a shot, and your dog put up the fowl, which are almost certain to fly down past you. If you accustomed a Newfoundland to this, he might, from his strength and vivacity, learn the trick of breaking away when you did not wish him. The best and most efficient kind of dog for this work is a cross between a water-dog and large terrier;—the terrier gives nose, and the water-dog coolness and steadiness. I should say, that, before you can procure one which upon trial may prove worth the great trouble of thoroughly training, you may have to destroy half-a-dozen. You should begin your training when the dog is *very young;* and, if you find he is not turning out as you could wish, seal his fate at once. The dog you want must be mute as a badger, and cunning as a fox: he must be of a most docile and biddable disposition; the generality of this breed are so: they are also slow and heavy in their movements, and phlegmatic in their temper—great requisites; but when fowl are to be secured, you will find no want either of will or activity, on land or water. The accompanying woodcut may serve to show the sort of dog

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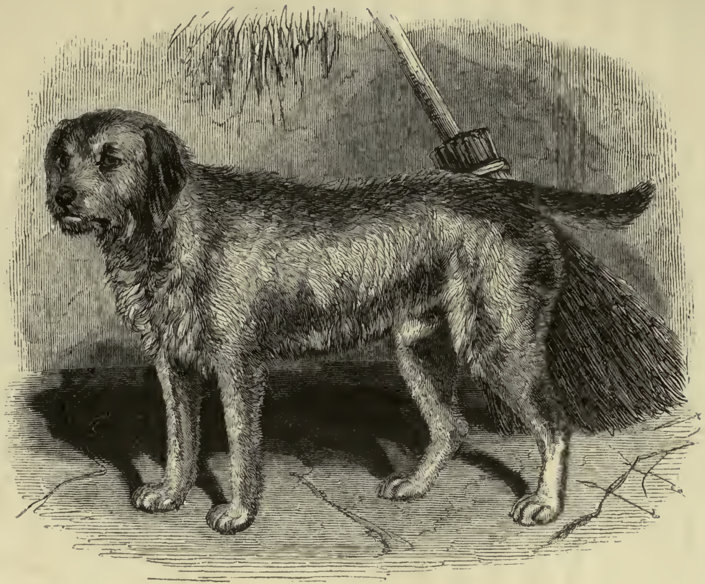
* My first attempts at shooting were in pursuit of wild-fowl when quite a boy, and I still consider it superior to any other sport. In these early days, however, I had no idea to what perfection a retriever might be trained; if the dog took the water well, and was close-mouthed, I expected no more. As I was always obliged to lead him by my side, he often spoiled my best chances, either by showing himself, or hampering me when crawling over difficult ground. I was at last so disgusted with these encumbrances, that I generally dispensed with their services, and trusted to my own resources for recovering the killed and wounded. The consequence was, that the greater proportion of the latter always escaped, and unless the wind was favourable, not a few of the former were drifted away. On one occasion I was foolish enough to swim one hundred yards into the loch, in the middle of winter, after a golden-eye, and had some difficulty in regaining the land. I had watched it for some time, and at last succeeded in getting to the nearest point on the shore. The golden-eye, however, was diving a long shot off, as these shy birds not unfrequently do: without once considering that the wind was blowing strong from the shore, I fired, and the bird dropped dead. To my great chagrin, it was blown rapidly out into the rough water. What was to be done? Had it been able to make the slightest effort to escape, I could have

allowed it; but there it lay, still as a stone. So, throwing off my shooting-jacket and shoes, I plunged in, waded up to the neck, and struck out for my prey. By the time I reached the bird, it had floated fully a hundred yards; but getting its leg between my teeth, I wheeled about for the land. My difficulties now began, for the waves were very high, and dashed right into my face. Several times, during my slow progress, I determined to leave the golden-eye to its fate, and as often braced myself up again, unwilling to have so cold a bath for nothing. At last I neared the shore, got into calm water, and, after sounding once or twice, struck ground, and reached *terra firma* with my prize, the leg of which I had nearly bitten through during my exertions. It was an intensely cold day about the end of December, with frequent snow-showers; and had the golden-eye not been the most valued of the diving race, I should never have made such a fool of myself. I arrived at home quite benumbed, determining no more to act the part of a retriever.

Another stormy mid-winter day, a farmer sent to let us know that a flock of wild-swans had appeared off the shore. My brother and I instantly started with our duck-guns. When we had reconnoitred with our glasses,



RETRIEVER, FOR LOCH-SHOOTING

I mean, being a likeness of the best I ever saw. He never gives a whimper, if ever so keen, and obeys every signal I make with the hand. He will watch my motions at a distance, when crawling after wild-fowl, ready to start forward the moment I have fired; and in no one instance has he spoiled my shot. I may mention a proof of his sagacity. Having a couple of long shots across a pretty broad stream, I stopped a mallard with each barrel, but both were only wounded: I sent him across for the birds. He first attempted to bring them both, but one always struggled out of his mouth: he then laid down one, intending to bring the other; but whenever he attempted to cross to me, the bird left fluttered into the water; he immediately returned again, laid down the first on the shore, and recovered the other. The first now fluttered

from a rising ground, we saw that the flock were resting some hundred yards from the land, but had little doubt, from the high wind, that they would soon seek its shelter. We accordingly chose different stations, and, crawling to them with the utmost caution, waited patiently for upwards of an hour. At last the swans, by imperceptible degrees, and much turning and wheeling, neared the shore, opposite my brother; but the water being shallow, they began to feed, as soon as their long necks could sound the bottom. He was thus forced to rush down to the edge, and take the distant shot. One lay badly wounded: had the wind been blowing towards the shore, the swan was so disabled that it could not have made head against it; but as it blew sideways, the creature managed to paddle itself out into the waves, every now and then uttering its wild piping cry. There was no boat nearer than a mile; we, however, set off at full speed, and, with a shock-headed urchin at the helm, launched into the deep. The wind was blowing a perfect gale, the waves lashing over, wetting us to the skin; and every time we changed our course, we were in danger of being swamped. We had almost given up hope, especially as the white foam of the bursting waves was so exactly like the object of our search as away, but he instantly secured it, and, standing over them both, seemed to cogitate for a moment; then, although on any other occasion he never ruffles a feather, deliberately killed one, brought over the other, and then returned for the dead bird.

The only other essential to the sportsman is a glass. A pocket telescope that will command two or three miles will be generally found quite large enough.

Having now equipped our wild-fowl shooter, we will again bring him to the shore. His first object should be to see his game without being seen himself, even if they are at too great a distance to show signs of alarm. To effect this, he must creep cautiously forward to the first point that will command a view of the shore for some distance; then, taking out his glass, he must reconnoitre it by inches, noticing every tuft of grass or stone, to which wild-fowl asleep often bear so close a resemblance, that, except to a very quick eye, assisted by a glass, the difference is not perceptible. If the loch be well frequented, he will most likely first discover a flock of divers, but must not be in a hurry to pocket his glass, until he has thoroughly inspected the shore, in case some more desirable

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to prevent our distinguishing it at any distance, when the "gilly" at the helm sung out, "I hear him!" All eyes were strained in every direction, and the poor swan was at last seen rising over the billows like the spirit of the tempest. There was much difficulty, and some danger, in getting it safe on board, and in all probability we should never have perceived it, had it not betrayed itself by its dying song. My retriever would have recovered both these birds in five minutes, and there would have been no risk of his spoiling the shot beforehand.

fowl may be feeding or asleep upon it. I will suppose that he sees some objects that *may* be wild-fowl. Let him then immediately direct his glass to the very margin of the loch, to see if anything is moving there. Should he find it so, he may conclude that it is a flock of either ducks, widgeon, or teal; those first perceived resting on the shore, and the others feeding at the water's edge—of course not nearly so conspicuous.* If there is no motion at the margin of the loch, he must keep his glass fixed, and narrowly watch for some time, when, if what arrested his attention be wild-fowl asleep, they will, in all probability, betray themselves by raising a head or flapping a wing.

He must now take one or two large marks, that he will be sure to know again, as close to the birds as possible; and also another, about two or three hundred yards immediately above, further inland. Having done this, let him take a very wide circle and come round upon his inland mark. He must now walk as if treading upon glass; the least rustle of a bough, or crack of a piece of rotten wood under his feet, may spoil all, especially if the weather be calm. Having got to about one hundred yards from where he supposes the birds to be, he will tell his retriever to lie down; the dog, if well trained, will at once do so, and never move. His master will then crawl forward, until he gets the advantage of a bush or tuft of reeds, and then raise his head by inches to look through it for his other marks. Having seen them, he has got an idea where the birds are, and will, with the utmost caution, endeavour to catch sight of them. I will suppose him fortunate enough to do so, and that they are perfectly unconscious of his near approach. He must lower his head in the same cautious manner, and look for some refuge at a fair distance from the birds, through which he may fire the deadly sitting shot. After creeping serpent-like to this, he will again raise his head by hair-breadths, and, peeping through the bush or tuft, select the greatest number of birds in line; then drawing back a little, in order that his gun may be just clear of the bush for the second barrel, after having fired the first through it, will take sure aim at his selected victims. Should he unfortunately not find an opening to fire through, the only other alternative is by almost imperceptible degrees to raise his gun to the right of the bush, and close to it; but in doing this the birds are much more likely to see him, and take wing. Never fire *over* the bush, as you are almost certain to be perceived whenever you raise your head: more good shots are lost to an experienced hand by a rapid jerk, not keeping a sufficient watch for stragglers, and over-anxiety to fire, than by any other way. Having succeeded in getting the sitting shot, the fowl, especially if they have not seen from whence it comes, will rise perpendicularly in the air, and you are not unlikely to have a chance of knocking down a couple more with your second barrel; but if they rise wide, you must select the finest old mallard among them, or whatever suits your fancy. Directly upon hearing the report, your retriever will run to your assistance, and having secured your cripples, you will reload, and, taking out your glass, reconnoitre again; for though ducks, widgeon, &c., would fly out upon the loch at the report of your gun, yet the diver tribe, if there are only one or two together, are perhaps more likely to be under water than above when you fire: but more of them by-and-by.

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* Duck-shooting on rivers and streams is generally unsatisfactory, there are so many turnings and windings which prevent you from seeing the fowl until they are close at hand; also so many tiny bays and creeks, where they conceal themselves beyond the possibility of detection, until the whirr of their wings and the croak of the mallard betray their hiding-place. Unless the river be large and broad, even the most expert wild-fowl shooter must expect few heavy sitting shots, and content himself with the greater number being distant flying ones.

Another invariable rule in crawling upon ducks is always, if possible, to get to leeward of them;* for although I am firmly of opinion that they do not wind you like deer, as some suppose, yet their hearing is most acute. I have seen instances of this that I could hardly otherwise have credited. One day I got within about sixty yards of three ducks asleep upon the shore; the wind was blowing very strong, direct from me to them, a thick hedge forming my ambuscade. The ground was quite bare beyond this hedge, so I was obliged to take the distant shot through it. In making the attempt, I rustled one of the twigs—up went the three heads to the full stretch; but when I had remained quiet for about five minutes, they again placed their bills under their wings. Upon a second trial, the slight noise was unfortunately repeated: again the birds raised their heads; but this time they were much longer upon the stretch, and seemed more uneasy. Nothing now remained but to try again; my utmost caution, however, was unavailing—the birds rose like rockets. I never hesitate concealing myself to windward of the spot where I expect ducks to pitch, feeling confident that, unless I move, they will not find me out. I have often had them swimming within twenty-five yards of me, when I was waiting for three or four in line, the wind blowing direct from me to them, without perceiving by any signs their consciousness of an enemy's vicinity.*

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* If you have also a bright sun at your back, and in their eyes, your advantage is great; but should the sun and wind favour opposite directions, let the nature of the ground decide your advance.

I was some winters ago shooting wild-fowl with a gamekeeper who firmly held the common notion of their keen noses. We saw a flock of about twenty pitched upon a long point, and no possibility of approaching them except directly to windward. "Now, sir," says the keeper, "if you'll stalk these ducks so as to get a good shot, I'll never care for their noses again!" They had the full benefit of the wind as it blew pretty strong, but there was some soft snow on the ground, which I knew would prevent their hearing; so I took him at his word, killed three with my first barrel, and, had they not been intercepted by the trees and bushes, would have knocked down at least one more with my second. The keeper has said ever since that their noses are not worth a straw:—my decided advice, however, is never to stalk wild-fowl to windward, *if it can be avoided;* for, should the snow be at all crisp with frost, or if there are many twigs and bushes to crawl through, their noses become acute enough!!!

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* Perhaps the sportsman may ask, what it signifies whether wild-fowl are aware of your approach by hearing or winding? My answer is, that although it is of little consequence when crawling upon ducks, yet when lying concealed, expecting them to pitch, it is a considerable advantage to know that you will not be detected by their sense of smell; otherwise, the best refuge for a shot must often be abandoned for a much worse.

When the weather is very hard, and ducks are driven to the springy drains, a simple way of getting fair shots, but seldom practised, is, *to make your man keep close to the drain*, and take your own place fifteen yards from it, and about forty in advance of him. The ducks will then rise nearly opposite to you. To walk along the drain is not a good plan, as they will generally rise either out of distance or very long shots; and, if you keep a little way off, they may not rise at all. When the loch is low, the sportsman may often get a capital shot at ducks the first warm sunny days in March, as they collect on the grassy places at the margin, to feed upon the insects brought into life by the genial heat.

But to return to our wild-fowl shooter, whom we left glass in hand looking out for divers. He sees a couple plying their vocation fifteen or twenty yards from the shore, about half a quarter of a mile from where he stands. He selects his vantage-ground as near as possible for a last look before commencing his attack. Having gained this, he makes his dog lie down, and peeps cautiously until he sees the birds—waits till they both dive together; then running forward whilst they are under water, again conceals himself, expecting their reappearance. The great difficulty is always to keep in view the exact spot where the birds come up: once lose sight of it, your progress is stopped, and, in recovering your advantage, the birds are almost certain to see you and fly. When within one race of the divers, cock both barrels, and as soon as they *together* disappear, run to the nearest point on the shore for a shot.

If the day be calm, the rising bubbles will show where they are; you can then clap your gun to your shoulder, ready to fire. Always, in such cases, shoot on wing, and be sure to fire well forward: should a diver only be winged, it is useless to tire your retriever in pursuit; but if he is at all struck about the legs also, a good dog should be able to secure him.

So much for the small morillon. The golden-eye is a much more artful bird, and requires more caution. If, without seeing an enemy, he is at all alarmed while diving near the shore, he will probably swim out to a considerable distance—reconnoitring all the time, and making a noise something like a single note of the hurdy-gurdy. You may perhaps expect his return, and wait for him; but although he may remain about the same place, making these calls, and apparently careless, he is all the time very suspicious; and I only once or twice, in my whole experience, knew him return to the spot where he was first discovered. Should he get sight of you, there is no hope, even if he does not take wing, which he most likely will. The little morillon may return, if you think him worth waiting for; but he is so hard and coarse on the table, that it would be paying him too great a compliment. The golden-eye, on the contrary, is a great delicacy—a sufficient proof, I think, were there no other, that morillons are not young golden-eyes, as many suppose. This idea, I have little doubt, arises from the colour of the female golden-eye being pretty much like that of the morillon. The shape, however, is different, and the size of the female golden-eye nearly equal to that of the male. I have shot them, right and left, when diving together, the female being the most wary of the two. The morillon may be in the same flock, as different kinds of divers often are; but there is not half the caution required to get a shot at him, and, when compared, he is much rounder in shape and one-third smaller in size. It may be said, "And why should not this be the young of the same species?" I answer, That the young males of all the duck tribe that breed in this country, from the mallard to the teal, gain their bright feathers the first moulting, after which the young males are at least equal in size to the females. But my chief reason I have already given—If the morillon is the young bird, why should he reverse the usual order of things, and be less tender and delicate than his parents?*

When several are diving together, you must get as near as possible without alarming them; and, selecting a couple who dive at the same moment, hoot away the others, who will be far out of reach before their companions come up. They will probably never miss them until they have taken two or three dives, thus giving you an opportunity of getting the shot; of which you would have had a much worse chance while they were together.

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* Mr Baker, the bird-fancier, assures me that there are a couple of morillons in the Regent's Park, which have been there some years, and show no signs of the golden-eye. His words are—"Any one may see the difference at a glance." *There is a mark of faded orange, or dingy white, upon the morillon's bill, that I never detected on a golden-eye's, young or old.*

In recommending this, be it observed, I am supposing the ground of difficult access; when favourable, even a novice should be able to get within a run of any number of fowl, without being seen by the most wary of the flock, and can then make his selection. For my own part, I hardly ever adopt this plan; but where the ground is bare and open, an unpractised wild-fowl shooter would stand no chance otherwise.

When the flock is large, it always puzzles a beginner to ascertain the length of time they are under water, in order to know what time he may *safely* allow for his last run, which in such a case must generally be a long one. The fowl are continually coming up and disappearing again, which confuses him; and *unless he knows the depth of the water*, the only way to find out how long they are under is to watch the most marked or detached of the flock, and then choose his devoted pair. *If the water is very shallow*, those below are sure to perceive the flurry made by their friends at the top, as soon as you commence your last run, and instantly join them in their retreat. In such cases it is always best to try for a distant sitting shot, from the nearest refuge you can safely reach, among as many as you can get in line. But by attempting this, there is always a risk of losing the chance altogether, and it should never be resorted to except under such circumstances, or with *dun-birds*, who keep more close together, and thus present a better opportunity for a heavy sitting shot than any other divers.

Of all wild-fowl, a flock of dun-birds is the most agreeable to the sportsman's eye. They are the most stupid of all the diver race: I have even seen them, after having been driven from their feeding-ground, return in the face of the shooter, who had only lain down without any covering or concealment whatever: they have begun diving again within thirty yards, and of course given him an excellent shot. I never wish for assistance in manœuvring any other kind of water-fowl, but these may be herded like sheep; and, if feeding on one side of a bay, you have only to conceal yourself at the other, and send your man round to where they are diving. They will most likely come straight towards you, and, again beginning to feed, will probably every five or ten minutes draw all together with their heads up. Now is your time to fire, if you have the good fortune to be within shot; but should you prefer two birds in the hand to waiting for their knitting together, you may have a capital right and left when they come up from diving. I, however, should be loath to lose the opportunity of the sitting shot.

But the case quite alters when dun-birds have been fired at once or twice. Like deer under similar circumstances, they become most wary and suspicious; and although, upon the first appearance of the flock, a novice may easily procure a heavy shot, yet, after they have been surprised by the leaden shower, the most dexterous wild-fowl stalker may often be baffled in his attempts to approach them.*

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* When dun-birds have been so persecuted as to frighten them away to try fresh feeding-ground, they are again not difficult of approach until fired upon in their new quarters, when they become wilder than ever.

This should make the owners of wild-fowl lochs most particular to keep all quiet near the feeding ground of large flocks of fowl, but especially of the dun-birds.

I may advance another claim why the first arrival of dun-birds should not lightly be disturbed, viz.:—the supply of food they cast up for other wild-fowl. Widgeon and ducks feed upon the blades which float upon the surface of the water, after the roots have been torn up from the bottom, nipped off, and devoured by the dun-birds. They are thus unwittingly made to minister to the wants of their poorer brethren. When, therefore, the sportsman sees a tempting flock of widgeon in attendance upon their purveyors, who have been scared away from the shore, to dive on a too distant shallow, it is of no use to wait for them; for, be the wind ever so keen, the widgeon will not leave the plentiful supply of grass food cast up by the diving birds. But with a cutting wind and no dun-birds to depend on for food, ducks, but especially widgeon, never try the patience long ere they seek the shelter of the shore.

There are many other divers that frequent our lochs, such as the tufted and scaup-ducks, &c., but they may all be approached in the same way as the golden-eye and morillon; none are so shy as the former.* Those that feed on fish, such as the goosander, speckled diver,* merganser, &c., require rather different tactics. To get a shot at any of these, you must watch which way they are feeding, and, taking your station somewhat in advance, wait until they pass you: they will not keep you long, as they are very rapid in their movements. Take care that the water is pretty deep where you place yourself, or they may dive at too great a distance from the shore for a shot; but, after all, they are good for nothing but to be stuffed for a collection.

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* I had once a good opportunity of contrasting the artful and suspicious nature of the golden-eye with that of the more confiding morillon. When shooting wild-fowl on the banks of the Teith, I discovered, with my glass, a golden-eye feeding at the top of a long creek, and a couple of morillons at the bottom where it joined the river. As they were at some distance from each other, it was impossible to keep an eye

The only other bird that requires a separate notice is the mighty hooper, monarch of the flood. To get a shot

upon both. So, knowing that if the golden-eye got a glimpse of me, he would not stay to take another, I was obliged to trust to the simplicity of the more social morillons. I got within a fair distance for my last run, when the morillons, who had caught a transient glance at my manœuvres, paid the compliment of giving me their undivided attention; but as they did not leave the ground, nor show any other sign of alarm, I was congratulating myself that all was safe. The moment, however, that the golden-eye came up from the dive, he perceived that the morillons were resting on their oars, and instantly was on his guard. It was most curious to see the cunning and tact of the creature, which I had every advantage for observing, as I was well concealed. He kept cruising about with outstretched neck, peering first on one side of the creek, then on the other, always selecting the best points of sight to halt and make his observations. Nor would he recommence his repast until the morillons had set him the example. And, had I not known his usual precaution of making the first dive or two, after being scared, very short, he might even then have escaped.

* The black-throated diver is sometimes met with on our lochs. My brother shot a young one on Loch Lomond. I killed another bird of the year out of a flock of six, but unfortunately let off the old drake, a tree having intercepted my shot.

at the wild-swan is the great object of the sportsman's desire: he is not naturally so shy a bird as the wild-duck, but still his long neck, and acute sense of hearing, render great caution necessary. If, as often happens, he is feeding along the shore, you have only to plant yourself in an advantageous situation a good way ahead, and it will not be long before he makes his appearance; but if he is feeding at the mouth of some brook or stream, you must crawl in the same way as when after wild-ducks. Should you get within a distant shot of a hooper, and are not close to the water-side, instead of firing from where you are, rush down to the edge of the loch, and before the swan can take wing, you will have gained ten yards upon him. When the thaw begins after very hard weather, they are almost sure to be feeding at the mouths of any mountain-burns that run into the loch. Should you see hoopers feeding greedily, nearly out of range of your gun, in place of taking the random shot, try to prevent their being disturbed, and return at dusk of evening or grey of morning, when they will most likely have come pretty close to the shore, especially if any little rivulets run into the loch near: this rule applies to most water-fowl. If a swan be alarmed by an enemy on shore, his wont is not to fly, but to swim majestically away.

Widgeon and teal are approached in the same way as wild-ducks, only the widgeon are less shy than the ducks, and the teal than the widgeon. You may sometimes, in calm weather, see widgeon in a large flock purring and whistling a couple of hundred yards from the shore; you need give yourself no trouble about them, as they will probably not leave their resting-place until they feed in the evening. Always try to get a heavy shot at widgeon, which, with a little patience, you may generally accomplish. Teal are usually in small flocks; so that, if you can get two or three in line, you had better fire, for fear of losing the sitting chance altogether. I once killed six at a shot; but, except when they collect in small ponds and drains about the loch-side, so good an opportunity seldom occurs. I have occasionally seen shovellers on our lochs; but only in the hardest winters. They resemble wild-ducks in their habits: the only one I ever shot was among a flock of ducks.

Good sport need never be expected when the loch is large, as many of the fowl swim up creeks, and among the morasses in-shore, where it is difficult even to get a flying shot; while those that remain on the margin of the loch are so concealed by the bushes, &c., that it is quite impossible to see them. The lower the loch the better; at all events the shore should be clearly defined. At such times, wild-fowl have always favourite haunts for feeding and resting.

There is a common saying, that specimens of all the different kinds of water-fowl which frequent the loch in winter present themselves during the harvest-moon. This is erroneous; for even the morillon, earliest of the diver tribe, seldom appears so soon; and the tufted and scaup-ducks, dun-birds, &c., never until the winter sets in. Multitudes of wild-ducks do come down from the moors, during harvest, to feed upon the corn-fields on the banks of some of the larger lochs, and, when the stubble becomes bare, return to the moor-lochs until these are frozen over, which again drives them back. This is the only foundation for the vulgar error. A day or two is generally sufficient to freeze over these little lochs, and their occupants then come down to the larger ones, the greater parts of which remain open long after the storm has set in. Now is the time for the wild-fowl shooter: if the ground is covered with snow, so much the better. The fowl are then in groups close to the shore, pinched with cold and hunger, seeking shelter and a scanty morsel. If at the same time it is windy, with drifts of snow, no weather can be more propitious for ducks, widgeon, teal, and all wild-fowl that feed at the margin. When the snow is falling thick and fast, a capital sitting shot may sometimes be obtained, though the ground be so bare as to offer no concealment. In most cases, however, it is best not to take the cover off your gun till the shower moderates a little, as snow is so apt to penetrate, and make it miss fire.

If the weather be open, the higher the wind the better, as it drives to the shore whatever fowl are upon the loch, although until the frost sets in they will be comparatively few.

The most auspicious weather for divers is one of those frosty days, accompanied by mist, when the loch is perfectly calm, and looks like a mirror dimmed by one's breath. You may then hear their plash in the water—

sometimes even before they can be seen; and, if care is taken to make no rustling among the bushes, when they are above water, you have every prospect of a good chance. The smoothness of the surface and the mist makes each bird appear twice as large as it is, which enables you much more easily to catch sight of them coming up from the dive. The mist is also an excellent shroud if the ground is open, without a tree or bush to hide behind, when the birds are above water.

The wild-fowl shooter must never forget that the true proof of his skill consists in obtaining *sitting* shots, and stopping a number of fowl at one discharge; and, unless with divers, must not think of a flying right and left.

As an instance of what may be done by patience and caution, I may conclude this paper by mentioning that the gamekeeper of a relation, having seen a flock of ducks pitched upon the shore, and no way of getting near them but over a bare field, crawled flat upon his face a distance of three hundred yards, pushing his gun before him, not daring even to raise his head, and at last got within such fair distance that he stopped four with his first barrel, and one with the other, securing them all. His gun was only a small fowling-piece. I should add that he had been trained to deer-stalking, under his father, from a boy.

THE PEAT ISLE

A SQUARE flat island on Loch Lomond, called Inch Moan, but familiarly known as "The Peat Isle," (from the people of Luss having liberty to cast peats there,) is a favourite resort of every kind of wild-fowl. At a little distance, it appears almost level with the water, on which account, as well as from its mossy formation, it abounds in swamps and morasses. This may partly account for the partiality of the wild-fowl to its shores. But there are stronger reasons still: the retired wild character of the place, seldom visited by man, except for an occasional boat-load of peats, added to which the shallowness of the water at the edges, growing deep so very gradually, is most favourable to their feeding. In the season, the further end of the island, having a grassy margin and bottom, is much frequented by flocks of wild-ducks and widgeon; on many occasions I have put up not less than a thousand in one company. In the severest weather, the sea-eagle continually resorts there to prey upon the wild-fowl; and so voracious is it at this time that my father's gamekeeper had his water-dog nearly drowned by one of them when retrieving a wild-duck. He managed, however, to shoot the erne, the talons of which were long preserved as a trophy. I have seldom done much execution there with my gun, from the difficulty of approaching such a multitude of eyes over a dead level, where there is not a bush or tree to serve as a screen.

When the hoopers come to the loch, they are generally first observed at this part of Inch Moan; but to get a shot is next to impossible, as they can sound the bottom at the distance of several hundred yards from the land, and seldom feed nearer. They are also excellent watchmen for the fowl resting on the banks, and it is astonishing to see the quickness with which the latter notice the slightest sign of alarm shown by their white sentinels. But although I have had many disappointments from the aforesaid causes, yet by watching them at a distance with my glass, I have taken many a lesson in the habits of the birds, and got useful hints for future operations.

A short distance from the shore, perhaps, may be seen a flock of tufted ducks, diving at longer or shorter intervals, according to the depth of the water; seldom appearing at the top without their mouthful of grass, which is cunningly watched by a stray mallard or two, ready to pounce upon the prize the moment it is seen. The mallard, however, but rarely succeeds in his piracy, as the divers generally manage to gulp down their mouthful. At last, tired of the bootless chase, the plunderers join their comrades at the margin, contenting themselves with what may drift there from the feeding-ground of the divers.

In very severe weather, especially during a snow-storm, both ducks and widgeon are apt to trust to the diving tribe as their purveyors. It would be difficult for any one who has not witnessed it, to imagine the supply left by a flock of dun-birds on a lee shore. I have seen as much as a cart-load drifted on not more than fifty yards of coast.

The wild-duck sometimes feeds by diving, but this is only in spring, after pairing. The dives are very short, and it is probable that at this time they are feeding on some water-insect which they could not find at the margin. In winter they never feed farther from shore than they can sound the bottom, by sinking their heads and turning up their tails, like the domestic duck. An artificial supply of food will sometimes cause moss-ducks to collect in small flocks on running streams. The river Gala flows sluggishly just below the town of Galashiels, bringing down the refuse from the houses, and here I never missed seeing ducks in hard weather. They stuck to the place most pertinaciously, although I repeatedly fired at them from behind a wall and killed several. I solved the mystery one morning by finding half a potato, neatly peeled and cut for the saucepan, in the bill of a mallard I had just shot. So I perceived that this spot was a kind of nucleus round which a quantity of the rubbish had collected.

But I have flown far away from my island, where, in summer as in winter, there is always some rare and shy sojourner. At the end of some long point, immersed to the feathers in the clear water, stands the patient lonely heron, waiting till the shoal of incautious fish, which the warm sun has brought to the shallows, begin curiously to nibble at its silvery legs. When, striking down its harpoon bill, with far greater certainty than a leister thrown by the most skilful hand, it rarely or never fails to draw up its victim. Not far distant, and perched upon an archipelago of rocks, may be seen the snowy-breasted herring gull, while its mate is floating upon the glassy deep. At the sound of a footstep, they both extend their sluggish wings, and soar high into the air with loud and discordant scream—a pretty sure sign that the nest is near. This call, not altogether unlike the barking of a dog, may be heard for miles around, and is to be considered a note of alarm rather than of defiance.

Herons and gulls build every year on this island, or near to it.* We have often tamed the young of both, and it would be difficult to say which are the most voracious. I have given half-a-dozen perch at a time, which have been instantly swallowed, dorsal fins and all, by one of these young gluttons. As soon as their wings grew, they wandered away, and would not suffer themselves to be secured until they were half-famished. The gulls would often be driven back by extreme hunger to the place where they were usually fed: the herons, even in this state, had always to be carried home, tempted by a fish or piece of raw flesh which was held out to them. After getting hold of one by the above stratagem, I was amazed to see it throw up a dead mole, which showed the straits to which it had been reduced. Another, which I winged about the end of November at the foot of a drain, cast up three or four good-sized trout. How it had caught them at that season, I should like to know.*

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* Formerly there used often to be a brood of black game on the Peat Isle, but of late years grouse have always hatched at the far end of it: this I believe they do on no other island of the loch.

The young gulls are very fond of slugs, &c., and two kept in my father's kitchen garden were of great use in destroying such reptiles. They require more solid food, however; but these dainties appear to come in as a dessert. The nests of the herons are always on a tree or ruin; those of the gulls on a dry sandy piece of ground on the island. The red-breasted merganser, and the goosander, may be seen in the summer, but are constant visitors in winter, —the latter sometimes scattered along the shore in flocks of fifty and upwards.

But the most interesting summer emigrant is the curlew. There is a melody in its two wild notes that carries an indescribable charm over the calm waters or the lonely moor. It generally makes its appearance a little after the green plover, and both hatch on the island every year. By imitating the curlew's cry, I have often arrested its flight, even at an immense distance, and brought it wheeling round my head for some minutes together. In early spring it is generally most clamorous, and continues so until it leaves the inland moors and lochs for the sea-coast with its young brood. The chicks run very soon, but are so difficult to find, that upon some of our Lowland moors I have counted at least a dozen pairs of old birds, yet have not stumbled on a single young one. As I was returning one day from fishing, my old dog found and pointed a couple, which I transferred to my creel, and had dressed for the table. They were nearly full grown, but could not fly a yard. The young curlews are great annoyances to the gamekeeper, from the facility with which they elude even the best-trained pointers. The dog is continually touching upon their scent, which distracts his attention from game; but he scarcely ever "*winds*" one, to make amends for this waste of time. Before the 12th of August, however, all the curlews have left.

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* In the winter 1837–8, I shot five fine specimens of the heron. None of them had any food in their crop.

Many years ago, an eccentric man was tempted to raise a house on the Peat Isle. He put up four substantial walls, but stopped payment at the roof; and this edifice, so far as it goes, still stands, a monument of his folly. It has often, however, been useful to us as an observatory for wild-fowl.

The sheep-pasture of this island is peculiarly rich, and always in great request among the farmers. It is seldom, however, that its quiet is disturbed by the presence either of a shepherd or his dog. Should any traveller chance to read this description, and look down upon my lowly island from one of its commanding neighbours, no doubt he would wonder at my selection. There is, indeed, no waving copse, no rocky height, with its varied view, to entrance the summer visitor, but it has to me even a greater charm in its wild and lonely seclusion.

For the last few winters, the wild sport on Loch Lomond has much deteriorated from what I recollect it in former years. The frosts have never been so long-continued nor so severe as to tame the fowl, and bring wild swans or geese.* Besides, the soft rainy weather of the west has prevailed so much, rendering the loch large and full, that the few water-fowl that do frequent it at such unfavourable times, have all kept to the shallow water on the eastern side. But should a frost set in, the shallow parts of course are first frozen, the loch falls rapidly, and they come pouring over to our side. Every day brings fresh numbers both from the shallow coast opposite, and the moor lochans, now frozen up. In January 1848, there were only ten days of frost, and the preceding year about the same amount of continued hard weather. I spent the best days of both seasons on the loch, and will endeavour to show what the admirer of wild-fowl shooting may expect upon such expeditions.

There are three excellent ranges for wild-fowl, all beginning at Rossdhu House. One, down to the old water of Fruin, called the Mid-Ross Shore, is a great resort of widgeon and ducks. It extends along a flat grassy lonely coast, with fine screens of whin and broom. Another takes in the whole shore as far as Luss. It is full of weedy bays and green points, and is much frequented by dun-birds, tufts, scaups, and morillons. The third range comprehends the islands—viz., Inch Moan, which I have just described, Inch Tavannach, and Inch Connachan. The narrow passage between these islands, called the Straits, is a fine shelter for all wild-fowl from the hooper to the teal. And, lastly, the Castle of Galbraith, a very small island, although it has no feeding ground, makes a good resting-place for ducks at mid-day. When they are detected there, in fancied security, with their beaks under their wings, and one leg tucked up comfortably into their breast feathers, it is the most certain opportunity for a sitting shot. There is also a fine view of Inch Moan, and part of the Straits, from the top of the ruin, once the yearly resort of the osprey, and which I never ascend without regret for having murdered her on her own threshold. From the top of this ruinous castle, the best haunts of the wild-fowl on the adjoining islands may be commanded with a telescope. Tradition says that a sort of wild man, called Galbraith, domiciled in the old castle, and being a most expert swimmer, as he had much need to be, he used to strike out for Rossdhu House, take the roast off the spit, tie it round his body with a string, and return in triumph to his island. When a boy, I was much horrified at this account, and used to picture a sort of half-demon, half-maniac, breaking into the house, the inmates flying right and left, while he marched to the water with his smoking booty.

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* It was very different in my boyish days, when our harder winters often froze the loch completely over, and secured us plenty of northern refugees. I have a perfect recollection of the white forms of the hoopers before our nursery windows. On one occasion my late father, who was not much of a sportsman, and only an indifferent shot, loaded his common fowling-piece with "swan-post," and killed, in the bay behind the house, two swans with his first barrel, and one with his second—all fine old birds.

A few years ago, a young hooper made a presentation of itself to the Zoological Gardens of Edinburgh. It flew into the wild-fowl pond of its own accord, was secured, and pinioned. It lived nearly two years, and I have frequently seen it.

I will now recount the adventures of eight days' duck-stalking, beginning Friday, January 21st, 1848. Frosty, but not very hard. Took the Luss beat, the loch not being low enough for Mid-Ross shores, attended by gamekeeper, with a little wiry hairy retriever that looked as if he could stand as much cold as a Polar bear. No fowl of any kind on Luss shores, so embarked for the islands. Detected the whole mass of tufts, dun-birds, morillons, &c., diving and feeding together on the Inch Tavannach side of the straits. Saw it would be a most difficult stalk, and, from the nature of the ground, that I could only get a flying right and left. So it turned out: a long circuit brought me within a distant run—could get no nearer, so chose a pair of tufts, as being closest to shore. Watched their simultaneous dive. Made my run, and dropped both. Took boat for Inch Moan, as the straits were now cleared of fowl for this day. Only three moss-ducks on a green point of the south side. A long stalk, and distant chance. Dropped a pair; one, however, rose again, and made off. Came round to north coast of the island. Nothing but a dab-chick, which I shot for a specimen. In the far distance, to the west, keeper spied what we thought a morillon diving, but when I advanced I saw it was a male tuft. Dropped him dead; a long shot. No more fowl seen to-day; total, five head.

Saturday, 27*th*. Embarked at ten o'clock, and steered straight for the Castle of Galbraith, as the fowl were not pinched enough to frequent Luss shores. Ascended the castle, and had the satisfaction of twigging a shoal of dun-birds busily feeding on the north shore of Inch Moan. Immediately set sail, and landed on the south side, under cover of the roofless house. Perused the flock through my glass, and was a little let down to see three ducks on the shore close under the dun-birds. The chance of a heavy shot at the latter materially lessened by the ducks. Waited to see if they would decamp, but they were hungry, and would not quit the weeds drifting in from their diving friends. Leaving gamekeeper in the house, I took a crouching stretch along the south shore, and, as the ground was dry and hard, did not grudge a long hand-and-knee crawl across the island. Neared the north shore without disturbing their operations, and, when within fifty yards of them, got my eye upon the mar-plot ducks, about thirty yards from me. Could easily have strung them all. The dun-birds were feeding in circles of from twenty to thirty yards in circumference. They were now at the farthest point, and I, of course, waited till they came to the nearest, which brought the mass to within forty yards. Fired into the middle of them. Six lay dead at my first discharge, and two from wing at my second. Three swam away, two only wing-broken, but the third badly struck in the body also. The keeper prudently did not slip the retriever, but instantly ran for the boat: he, too, had marked the mortally wounded bird; so, after securing the eight fowl, we followed in pursuit, and drove him ashore into a bush on Inch Tavannach. I put my hand into my pocket for my powder-flask, to load, in case he might dash out into the water again. No flask was there! I had left it on my dressing-table, when charging my gun, before coming out in the morning. Nothing now for it but to slip the retriever. Before he could reach the bush, however, the wary bird rushed out again upon its native element. Down under water, but the dive was a short one. Dive after dive—shorter and shorter. At last it could not get out of sight, and I soon picked up the ninth dun-bird to two discharges. When it is borne in mind that my charge did not exceed an ounce and three-quarters of No. 4 shot, and that the dun-bird is nearly as large as a duck, and decidedly the most hardy bird to carry away shot of all the *anas* tribe, any expert wild-fowl shooter will at once perceive how rare a piece of good fortune a shot of this kind is. It was, therefore, without much grumbling that I rowed to Rossdhu for my powder-flask, a distance of about two miles. When we returned to Inch Moan, the day had worn on. I got a flying right and left at widgeon, on the far end of the island, killing both.

It was now late, so we sought the mainland, and I emptied my gun at a fine roebuck passing close to me in the dusk. My No. 4 told well, and he fell dead without a struggle. Eleven head, and a roe.

Monday, 24*th*. Mist so thick that stalking was out of the question. Calm. Frost hard, and ground dry. Only one chance at a mud mallard, and slew him on Inch Moan. One head.

Tuesday, 25*th*. Close and misty as yesterday. Frost continued. Only two chances; (they certainly might be called so, for the mist made it all chance together;) one at widgeon, which I stalked by sound of their purring and whistling on Mid-Ross shore. Killed three at a shot. When returning, stumbled on a mallard, and dropped him dead. This evening a brisk wind set in. Four head.

Wednesday, 26*th*. Clear frost, with a little wind. Took the Mid-Ross beat. About a mile before we got to the good ducking-ground, a heron rose out of a swamp in an oak copse. Fired, and dropped her among the trees. A good omen! As soon as we ascended Auchintulloch Brae, which commands a long reach of Mid-Ross, saw three ducks and a drake feeding in the nearest bay. A very easy stalk. Wounded two ducks sitting with my first barrel, and, had not my second slipped off by accident, would have killed the mallard in all likelihood. Dick, the retriever, secured one of the wounded; the other made away. The next chance was a flying right and left out of the old watercourse of the Fruin. Killed a duck, and mortally wounded a drake. Both long shots. Marked down the drake, which separated from the flock. With my glass I perceived a fine phalanx of widgeon, closely wedged on Fruin Point. A bare and difficult approach over the long promontory, and very few bushes to hide me. Could not get nearer than sixty-five yards. Had to fire lying flat on the ground. Only one lay.

Rested for an hour, to give the fowl time to come in shore for the evening feed, and then returned over the same ground. Keeper discovered, with his telescope, a mallard near where the wounded one pitched. Had no doubt it must be him. A very difficult approach. When I neared him, found he had a couple of ducks with him, so was sure it could not be my victim. In attempting to get a fair sitting shot, they saw me, as the ground was bare, and flew up at sixty yards. I did justice upon the polygamous chief by killing one of his ducks. Did not obtain another chance till near the end of the beat, when I saw a couple of widgeon feeding in a weedy creek, and killed both at one shot. Six head and a heron.

Thursday, 27*th*. Clear hard frost. This morning a fine fleet of dun-birds sailed into Ross-dhu Bay, the first that had appeared there since the winter began. The keeper and I were soon on the *qui vive.* They were diving within a near shot, on the opposite side of the bay. When I succeeded in getting within fifty yards, a piece of white ice gave way under my foot. They did not see me, so only ceased feeding, and paddled out into the bay. I knew they would soon return, so kept my post. Unfortunately, they neared the shore further down the bay; and, as I saw they would not move from the plentiful table that had attracted them, I dodged back, and came round above. Fired right and left; a longish shot. Four lay, one only wing-broken. Dick retrieved the trio, but I only got a glimpse of the other close to the beach.

We now started for Mid-Ross. Spied a trip of five widgeon from Auchintulloch Brae; they were greedily feeding a few yards from shore, close to a fine screen of whin. Waited long for three in a line, as they were scattered. At length I succeeded in getting them placed fair. Only the centre bird lay; the swelling waves saved the others. By aid of telescope, saw a fine batch of teal on old Fruin Point again. Precisely the same stalk as yesterday; the teal were, however, nearer than the widgeon. Killed four, and did not see any wounded. Gave the customary hour's law of rest, and then returned. Keeper perceived a duck and drake in the first bay after crossing Fruin Water, on our way home. A good shelter within forty yards of them, which I easily reached. Killed the mallard sitting on the beach and the duck flying out upon the loch. Only one more trip of widgeon on the shore; a very long shot from the nearest ambush. Fired right and left, sitting and flying, without bringing down a bird. Ten head.

Friday, 28*th*. A heavy snow-storm all day. Did not leave the house.

Saturday, 29*th*. Keen wind and hard frost. Snow a foot deep. A famous day for water-fowl. Thought the weather sufficiently severe to bring the fowl to Altochly, Camstraddan, and Luss shores, so determined to try them before the islands. Saw three widgeon feeding on the green surface food in Rossarden Bay. As they were out of shot, did not wait, intending to give them a benefit on my return. A couple of moss-ducks were grubbing in Altochly Bay, two yards from the land. With difficulty obtained a long right and left. The first I fired at sitting, the other flying. The No. 4 flew all about the sitting bird, but she did not seem hit; the other fell dead, to Dick's delight. Proceeding a little further, we were encouraged by a distant view of the dun-birds busily at work in Camstraddan Bay. A long, intricate, and dangerous crawl, from the birds being very scattered, brought me within a run. Sorry to see that they were diving upon a bank at an uncertain distance. Selected the nearest two, and made my run. Fired the moment they topped the water; both fell, one dead, the other fluttered away into the waves, and was soon lost sight of. Keeper, meantime, had got his eye upon a solitary morillon, a short way off, which was under water when I fired. The ice prevented his getting so near the shore as he evidently wished. Easily stalked him, and made the first dead miss since the commencement of my sport. Meant to shoot him on the wing, but he would not fly until I was in the act of taking a poking sitting aim; spread his wings at the critical moment of pulling the trigger, and, in fact, flew away from the leaden shower before it reached him. Did not waste my second barrel upon so worthless game, but had a good laugh at his escape. When we returned to Rossarden, two of the widgeon had fed pretty close to the shore, the other remained in the deep. Stalked the pair from Rossarden wood, and strung them both at a shot.

Embarked for Inch Moan. When about a mile off, saw two small flocks of moss-ducks, one on the north and the other on the south side of the island. Of necessity, we must put up one flock by stalking the other. Made choice of the southerns. When I neared them on hand and knee, they were so dispersed that I could only pick off a bird with each barrel. Wounded both badly, but one flew out into the rough water before it dropped. Dick retrieved the other with difficulty.

A crowd of widgeon were collected in the north-east bay of the island. Made a long and careful approach. Got within a fair shot, and dropped four to my two discharges; secured three. Dick had the fourth under his paws, but it managed to escape. It was now almost too dark to spy our game; we, however, twigged a couple of morillons in Inch Connachan Bay. Got to the nearest point without difficulty. Both popped up their heads at the same moment; I killed one, but the other flew into the dark shadow of the island. Nine head.

As will be seen from the above sketch, the rough weather drove the wild-fowl into the shelter of the bays to-day; also the waves prevented the wounded from being either seen or retrieved.

Monday, 31*st*. Delightful weather for wild sport; keen frost and calm. The same range as yesterday. Only a solitary duck on Rossarden to-day. Poor thing, she was taking advantage of the few slant rays of sunshine for a siesta! A massy rock, which towered about forty yards from her resting-place, was easily gained. She was standing on one leg, with her bill under her wing, the very picture of repose, which I don't think I broke, as she never moved after she fell off her green cushion into the water.

Saw the dun-birds, but they were also at rest midway between the islands and the shore. Settled to pay them a visit at dusk, when we were sure they must be at supper in Camstraddan Bay. In the meantime to search the islands. Saw some little black lumps on Galbraith, and, with my telescope, made out a small flock of ducks. It always inspirits us to see them on this island, as, with good management, a fair shot can generally be obtained. We pulled silently past, until we got the castle between us and our quarry, and then, by slow and noiseless strokes, reached the strand. The brushwood was so thick that, although I had only about twenty yards to creep, it took me near half-an-hour before I was placed fair for my shot. They were quite dispersed and asleep; so, as my second barrel was useless, from the thicket in which I was enclosed, I picked out a fine mallard, and the rest escaped scot-free. No fowl on Inch Moan to-day. Spied a flock of dun-birds, however, in Inch Connachan Bay. Got to the nearest ambush on the shore, but they were diving on a sunk bank in the middle of the bay. Lingered an hour in vain, as they would not leave their feeding-ground. Was obliged, at last, to content myself with a morillon, which opportunely fed round between them and me, just when my patience was exhausted. To make up, keeper, in the meantime, had a noble chance in the straits, all ready for me. Widgeon, tufts, and golden eyes were all within easy distance from the snow-covered rocks. With great caution I neared the white rampart, placed my white cap on my head, and peeped cautiously over. It was some time ere

I made my selection, but at last I got several tufts, golden eyes, and morillons together. Killed two fine male tufts, and winged a morillon with my first discharge, knocking over a golden eye flying with my second. The winged bird, however, escaped. We now set off at racing speed for the dun-birds in Camstraddan Bay. In taking a passing glance at Galbraith, was surprised to see something like ducks. Took out my telescope, thinking it most unlikely that fowl would be resting there again, especially so late. To be sure, it was a couple of ducks asleep! We, therefore, determined to sacrifice the dun-birds to the ducks. A bird on the isle worth two in the bay. Got to them in the same way as before, for they were nearly in the same spot. Had to change my position several times before I could get both in line; this is always dangerous. At last I detected a small opening in the bushes, which gave me the command of them. Fired, and both lay. Sprang down to secure them, but the mallard rose again, so I gave him his quietus with my second barrel. The duck was dead. Eight head.

This ended my wild-fowl shooting for 1848; in all, fifty-four head, a heron, and a roe. The gamekeeper gave me able assistance, and is the only one I ever was out with who understands that sport. In January 1847, I bagged forty-eight head in the same number of days.* It is curious that the frost lasted about the same time both years, and, by the merest chance, the thaw began, in both seasons, the very day I had fixed to leave the loch, when the frost was at the hardest. Neither swans nor geese showed themselves either year; but, had the storm been more severe, we should, no doubt, have had some fine chances at them.

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* In 1849 there was neither frost nor fowl. In 1850 I had five days, and killed forty head; on one of the days I bagged twenty-two head, and only let off three wounded birds; but the frost, although long-continued, was not

Inch Tavannach and Inch Connachan were teeming with roe; we seldom passed their shores, especially in the evening, without seeing sometimes seven or eight together.

Ducks and widgeon generally keep the lee-shores; this, however, need not disconcert the stalker, if he only does not let them hear him. I have constantly observed that they *wind* you best in calm weather. In high wind never fear their *noses*, even should it blow direct from you to them. My brother has a gunning-punt upon Loch Lomond, and it was well ascertained, and constantly affirmed, by the boatmen, that the approach with the wind was far "shurer" than when working against it. They always, therefore, tried to advance upon fowl with a *favouring gale*. From the smallness of the flocks, in comparison with those on the sea-coast, and also from the places where they sheltered being often inaccessible to the punt, it has always been considered a failure on our loch.

On *looking down* upon divers with your head on a level with the ground, take care that you do not fancy them

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very severe. This last winter, 1851, brought plenty rain, a full loch, and scarcely any water-fowl. It is useless to attempt wild sport on the Highland lochs in the open winters, and I never do so.

within range of your duck gun from the nearest point on the shore, when they are a long way beyond it. I have several times, under these circumstances, selected my pair, made my run down the bank to the beach, and found that the distance had been much foreshortened by my constrained view from above. When I got to the level ground, they were quite out of shot.

A wild-fowl gun for Highland lochs should not be very weighty, as a ponderous weapon is so uncomfortable to stalk with. It should be light enough to take smart rights and lefts. The largest charge of mine is one ounce and three-quarters of shot, and I can pull down snipe and woodcocks with it quite readily. Most people, however, prefer a duck gun that will carry at least two ounces of shot.

HAWKING

As I think it not altogether becoming in us moderns to forget the days of yore, allow me now a word or two about the recreations of our fathers, when they sallied forth, falcon on fist, with a gallant troop of retainers.

The aristocratic sport of falconry, though now banished by our deadly guns, has in it something so exhilarating and so gay, that any one who has witnessed it on ever so small a scale cannot wonder that it was once the pastime of the high and mighty of the land.

There are several kinds of falcons and hawks found in Scotland, all of which are capable of being trained; but the former are greatly superior, and always preferred. The largest is the gos-hawk,* the young males of which are called falcon-gentils, and were once thought a distinct species. Next in size is the jer-falcon, rather less than the gentil. These are rare in Scotland, although they occasionally build in some parts, particularly in the Northern Islands. All of them can knock down a heron and the largest game, including hares; but the most esteemed and active on wing is the jer-falcon, distinguished above the rest for its ferocity. Of the smaller kinds there is the peregrine, which yearly builds in many of our secluded glens and remote precipices. It is of this species that I have most to say. An old blackcock or pheasant is too strong for them, but they are able to bring down grouse or young black-game. Of the hawk tribe there is the hen-harrier, the male of which is blue, and the female, called the ring-tail, brown—the hobby,* the sparrow-hawk, and the kestril; the last-mentioned very numerous in some of the islands of Loch Lomond. Nor must I omit the smallest of the tribe, the merlin, not much larger than a thrush, inferior to none in boldness and activity. We have occasionally shot it in Dumbartonshire, and admired the elegance of its diminutive form, which seemed, according to its small proportions, a model of agility and strength.

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* The gos-hawk is short-winged, and not properly a falcon.

As none of these hawks, when trained, are much worth for game, one would think their depredations could not be very formidable; but, on the contrary, when at large, and allowed their full sweep of hill and dale, they do much mischief. I once put up a flock of teal which flew out upon the loch; a sparrow-hawk pursued, struck one scarcely a foot from the surface, and, though hardly able to bear its burden, flew with it a considerable way to the shore. I marked the place, and recovered the teal, with half of its head eaten, otherwise uninjured. Last summer, a wild-duck reared its young brood in a bay of Loch Lomond. They were reduced to a few by a small hawk. My brother saw it pick one up as neatly as possible, and another day the old duck was seen flapping its wings on the surface of the water, and endeavouring to drive off the hawk. The ducklings had all dived, but the first that popped up its head was instantly seized and carried off. The best powers, however, of these little poachers being only exerted on their own behalf, and the nests of the larger falcons being seldom found, the main stay of the falconer is the peregrine.

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* The hobby and merlin are entitled to be called falcons. They are long-winged, and have all the attributes of courage and speed. The former is only a summer visitant to the south of England; the latter is resident, and hatches yearly on our moors.

There is a gamekeeper in Dumbartonshine, who, when a boy, had received some lessons from the late John Anderson, of hawking memory, and, having also a natural turn that way, has perhaps as good a knowledge of the art as any one now alive. In a steep crag at the head of Glen-Douglas, a pair of peregrines build every year. The young are always taken by this man to be trained, and the old ones never molested. If great trouble and pains be taken, the young falcons may be fit for flying the first season, and I shall now describe a day's hawking with this keeper, which is a very novel spectacle to any one who has not seen it before, and is always, like coursing, most enjoyed by those ignorant of field-sports.

Early one morning, about the beginning of October, the keeper was on the stubble-field with a couple of peregrines on his fist, and followed by his son, a young lad, with a third bird, and a brace of old steady dogs. The hawks were all hooded, and with bells at their feet; the ground was hunted with great caution, and soon the dogs came to a point. The keeper immediately took off the hood from one of the hawks, and threw it into the air. The bird kept flying round in circles, the bells jingling at its feet. The keeper then advanced rapidly towards the dog, and a covey of partridges rose; the hawk instantly stooped down, and for many hundred yards there was a race, the partridges doing their utmost to outstrip the hawk, and the hawk making every exertion to overtake the partridges. At last he began to gain upon them, and when he drew near, made a sudden dash at one, which he seized in his claws, and flew to the ground. The keeper now walked up and secured the falcon, the partridge not being in any way torn or spoilt. Several points were afterwards got, and three more partridges killed; sometimes the partridges escaped, especially if they rose at a distance, and latterly, when the hawks became tired, they were no longer able to overtake them. When the hawk did not kill the bird, there was more difficulty in recovering it; but the keeper said he never lost one. He had a lure, which was a small board, about a foot long and half a foot broad, with some red cloth nailed upon it, on which he usually fed them; he threw this lure into the air, hallooing at the same time, and the falcons coming to it, were secured and hooded. When flown at snipe, the most beautiful aërial evolutions may often be seen, each endeavouring to out-soar the other, until both are nearly lost in the clouds; but a woodcock, if the groûnd is clear, makes the best sport of all.

The gamekeeper at Rossdhu harried this same peregrine's nest two years ago, and trained them for a different but very useful purpose. He flew them at carrion-crows, magpies, &c., which they drove into trees, and prevented from leaving until he advanced with his gun and shot them.

So much time and trouble, however, are required both in keeping and training hawks, that it is most likely the days of falconry are for ever gone by.

THE BASS ROCK

THIS singular cliff of the sea has been the subject of many pages and many prints; but no description can lessen the amazement felt on beholding it for the first time. I had been familiar with much of our sternest coast scenery, had shot sea-fowl on the Clet of Caithness, and stalked seals under the savage and perpendicular rocks of Morayshire; but there is a grandeur about this solitary giant of the deep which is different from any of the wildest scenes I had gazed upon before.

When nearing the Bass, the ochre-coloured lichen which covers many of the rocks, contrasted with the white guano of the sea-fowl, and the white feathers of the solands, has what painters call a "fine pictorial effect." But when the boatmen pull slowly under the beetling cliff, studded from top to bottom with rank upon rank of living fowl, one is rather paralysed than impressed with the stupendous scene.

At the time I was there, a raven's nest was fixed near the top of the western side. Three of the young, in appearance no bigger than blackbirds, were peering over the side. I could scarcely believe they were not jackdaws. The Peregrine falcon had also built outside the tower, and was wheeling aloft in company with the geese. I pointed him out as a sparrow-hawk, and was equally astonished when assured by the old boatman that he was "the blue hunting hawk." His nest was afterwards harried by a boat's crew from North Berwick, who came for the purpose in the night. Well did I know the peregrine, and had often admired his graceful bearing among his native hills. The sable tenant of desolation was an equally familiar acquaintance; and that I should have so strangely mistaken both, was sufficient proof of the vast height to which I looked.

Intending to shoot some specimens, I had brought my duck gun, and, at the first shot, killed a puffin or sea parrot, called a Tommy Norie by the old sailor in command of our craft. These pretty birds are very shy, although a good many haunt the landing bay. They always lay their one egg out of sight, and never upon the ledges of the rock. One or two were hatching in the holes of the prison where our fearless Reformer was confined; when peeping out with their quaint bills, they had an ancient look that reminded one of sturdy John, with his slouched hat, looking out of his loophole window.

The razor-bills are now scarce on the rock; they are more retired in their habits, and apt to conceal themselves in the clefts. I was fortunate in getting a chance at a very fine one flying past, and knocked him over. There are none of the small black guillemot on the Bass, although they sometimes hatch on the Island of May. The common kind, called by our boatmen "marrats," are very numerous. They are ranged along the cliffs like companies of soldiers; and half-a-dozen might often be strung at a shot. The kittiwakes are always perched at a good height upon a narrow ledge. I shot at one discharge a couple of these beautiful little gulls, which toppled almost into the boat. A few knots were flitting from rock to rock at the base; I also slew a couple of them.

There is a long narrow cavern right through the island, which every year harbours a pair of small green cormorants or shags; but the great cormorant only frequents the Bass in winter. We rowed into this cave, and hallooed several times. Just when we had got to the point where a sulky rock barred our further progress, and given up hope, out she flew over our heads, and within ten yards' distance. I stumbled, from the looming swell, in rising to fire, or I could easily have shot her. I did not want a specimen, so it was just as well the poor bird escaped.

We now landed at Tommy Norie Bay, and ascended the rock. Rabbits had been introduced by the present tenant some years ago, and have increased to a great extent. They were popping in and out of Blackadder's cell; a most wretched hole, with a small aperture for a window. We were told, however, that when removed there, from one much more comfortable, his health had wonderfully recruited; a circumstance I could nowise attribute to any salubrity in the abode, but to the merciful care of God over his faithful servants.

The rabbits seemed also to have taken a great fancy to the old chapel. Several were dotting about inside among the nettles, and had no means of exit, as we stood at the door. Their only enemies here are the raven and the peregrine. We saw the bones of a guillemot, which the latter had lately picked. On the top was a colony of gulls. There were two pairs of the greater black-backed or giant gull, and several pairs of the herring-gull. We were fortunate in spying one of the nests of the giant with two eggs. The boatman assured us they were fresh, as three was the usual number. Shortly after, we detected a herring-gull's with the full complement. The old tar was more doubtful of *them.* We therefore took the whole lot to what they call "the Spring," (though one accustomed to the pure springs of the Highlands is loath to allow it the name;) and old Jack was right, for the large gull's eggs sank like stones; while the herring-gull's rose up on end, but did not come to the top. We thus saw that they had been sat upon for some time, but not long enough to prevent them from being blown. There are one or two more of these wells, from half a foot to three feet deep, with soft oozy bottoms. They afford drink to a few sheep pastured upon the rock. At the fall of the year, there were ten white-faced seven-month-old lambs put on; but the half died. Had they been the black-faced, and a little older, they would have thriven apace, as the grass is very nutritious, and there is fine shelter in the clefts from every winter storm, whatever its drift.

If the look-up was astounding, the look-down was appalling. I certainly felt little inclined to covet the esteemed post of cliffman; which office, the old sailor told me with no small pride, his father had held for thirty years. He had succeeded him for a few years; but gave it up, as he was too weak to throw the young solands clear of the rock into the sea beneath. To do this effectually requires a very powerful arm. Many years ago, an aspiring blacksmith, trusting to his ponderous strength, offered to descend the Bass Rock. The ropes were adjusted, and he was lowered over the first shelf. As soon as he caught sight of the blue sea, and the abyss between, he went raving mad, and would not move. The people in the boat below perceived his state, and made signs to let him down, which was done by main force. It took several men to hold him in the boat; but, in about a month, he regained his faculties. He is now an old man; but to this day has never spoken slightingly of a cliffman's duties, or volunteered his unsolicited services.

About sixty years ago, when Canty Bay was much infested by smugglers, there lived below Tantallan a family of the name of Kelly. They were men of great resolution and herculean strength. The old tar said he had seen one of them take a pipe of smuggled wine upon his knee and drink out of the "bunghole." He was not at all pleased to see me smile at the relation of this feat. The grandson of this family had the reputation of being the best cliffman that ever descended the Bass. Upon one occasion he was searching above, and one of his uncles in the boat below; a very small pebble was dislodged near the top, and struck the uncle upon his thick sea-hat. It cut through the hat, stuck into his skull, and, before they could row ashore, he had nearly bled to death. The geese are sometimes maimed in the same way.

Adams, the renter of the Bass, is very dexterous in the management of the ropes above; which considerably lessens the risk of descent. There are regular periods in the year for this perilous work. The first search takes place at the beginning of summer, to gather the eggs of the guillemots, kittiwakes, &c.; and another in August, to collect the young gannets, which are stripped of their down, and then sold in the Edinburgh and other markets for sixpence apiece. The eggs of the gulls and kittiwakes are excellent; but those of the guillemots, razor-bills, and puffins, are rank-tasted.

I was amused to see the high mark they set upon the "purple geese," or those which have speckled backs, in consequence of not having quite shed the brown feathers. They are about three years old, and the beauty of the bird is in exact ratio to the brown spots on its back. For my part, I thought the pure white much handsomer. To please the old boatman, I shot a "purple," as well as a snowy specimen to stuff, and another pure white bird for his feathers, to dress sea-flies. They are superior for this purpose even to those of a swan.

Numbers of gannets flitted past with billfuls of decayed sea-weed for building their nests. They were formed entirely of this material, as we ascertained from examining the habitations of the two colonies which have been obliged to nidify on the top of the rock, all the shelves and ledges on the face being forestalled. They were so tame at these two places as often to refuse to move until kicked off the nest. They then stood chattering with open bill, and if you attempted to touch them would inflict a severe bite. Their threatening attitudes were ludicrously pompous.

One year the whole west side of the rock was depopulated, from fishermen and others having shot them, when they wandered up the firth in August, after an unusually long-continued shoal of herrings. The manner of the soland's attack upon these shoals is very curious. From a height of fifty or sixty feet, he comes down into the deep head foremost, with the solidity of a stone. I have watched a dozen follow each other in regular succession—keeping as true time as the ticking of a clock. When they emerge, they don't repeat the operation for some time, and fly out of the water with a lazy lagging flap.

Gentlemen often practise rifle-shooting at the geese. The site of some of their exploits was pointed out. One inviting snip of rock juts out upon a line with the walls of the fortress, where the riflemen take their station. They have seldom long to wait ere a gannet settles upon this point. It was called "Baird's shot," from some steady-handed Baird having frequently perforated his goose. Upon looking steadily at the distance, I could not reckon it more than seventy or eighty yards. Taking everything into consideration, the cool post of the shooter, and the fair position of his mark, a first-rate rifleman ought seldom to miss.

The only small birds I saw on the Bass were a couple of rock pipits, feeding among the withered sea-ware close to the landing bay. Their nest no doubt was near, and they had chosen a place to build it upon, which did not belie their name. Those inheritors of dilapidation and decay, the jackdaws, sum up the zoology I noticed on the Bass Rock. The old rampart walls and chapel had most likely tempted them over the sea from Tantallan Castle.

Having satisfied my curiosity, and procured all the specimens I wanted, we hoisted our sail and steered for Canty Bay. Numbers of the common gull were flitting about us on our passage, although I saw none on the Bass.

When stripping the soland of his best fly feathers, old Jack remarked that the wing-pinions were excellent for writing-quills. He had often commissions from the village teachers in the neighbourhood for a supply. There was a good deal of oil about them, which the schoolmasters extract by cutting off the end of the quills and soaking them in warm water. I took out my penknife and made one or two into toothpicks; upon which Jack assured me that I would find them "far praeferable to a prin" (pin).

There can scarcely be a more inviting resting-place than Canty Bay; a cheerful sunny beach of smoothest sand, enclosed by rising hillocks covered with wild flowers; the bold ocean-waves rolling before, and the bolder ocean-rock in full view. I now joined our party there, who had been busily giving books, &c., among the few cottages which lie in one sheltered corner. A poor man, whom reason had left, lay basking on the grass with a number of children playing all round him. He seemed gentle and kind to *them*, though no others dared to interfere. Sorrow had left its deepest traces on his poor old mother's face. Suffering of many kinds met our eyes; and we were painfully impressed with the contrast between the outer forms of nature and these poor wrecks of human kind.

ON EAGLES

Few sportsmen, who have been much in the wilds of Scotland, have not occasionally seen an eagle; but, except at the hatching season, it is extremely difficult to get a shot at one. Even then it is no easy task, for the nest is often in the face of some precipice which few dare to scale.

The golden-eagle is not nearly so great a foe to the farmer as to the sportsman; for although a pair, having young ones, will occasionally pounce upon very young and unprotected lambs, and continue their depredations until scared away, their more usual prey consists of hares, black-game, and grouse—a fact sufficiently proved by the feathers and bones found in their eyries. A pair used to build every year in Balquhidder, another in Glen Ogle, and a third in Glenartney. The shepherds seldom molested the old ones; but by means of ladders, at considerable risk, took the young and sold them. One of these brought to Callander, not long ago, when scarcely full-fledged, would seize a live cat thrown to it for food, and, bearing it away with the greatest ease, tear it to pieces, the cat unable to offer any resistance, and uttering the most horrid yells. From the havoc they made among the game, especially when they had young, the keepers in the neighbourhood have been very diligent of late years in searching out the eyries, and trapping the old birds; so that now, in this part of Perthshire, there is not one for three nests that there were formerly.

I recollect, some time ago, an eyrie in Glen-Luss, where a pair hatched yearly; but since the female was shot, no others have frequented the place. The shooting of this eagle was a service of great danger, and the man who undertook it a most hardy and determined fellow. The cliff was nearly perpendicular, and the only way of access was over the top, where a single false step would have sent him headlong into the gulf below. After creeping down a considerable way, he saw the eagle sitting on her eggs, a long shot off; but his gun was loaded with swanshot, so, taking a deliberate aim, he fired; she gave one shrill scream, extended her wings, and died on her nest. His greatest difficulty now was, how to avail himself of his success. He was not, however, the man to be balked; so, at the most imminent risk, he managed to get to the eyrie, tumbled the eagle over the cliff, and pocketed the two eggs. They were set under a hen, but did not hatch. I afterwards broke one of the shells, and was quite astonished at its thickness.

A fair shot may sometimes be got at the male when there are young ones in the nest, as he will often stoop down in their defence: at any other time, he is the most shy and wild of birds. I only know of one instance to the contrary, and that was in the depth of a very severe winter, when the creature was rendered desperate by hunger.

When two eagles are in pursuit of a hare, they show great tact—it is exactly as if two well-matched greyhounds were turning a hare—as one rises, the other descends, until poor puss is tired out: when one of them succeeds in catching her, it fixes a claw in her back, and holds by the ground with the other, striking all the time with its beak. I have several times seen eagles coursed in the same way by carrion-crows and ravens, whose territories they had invaded: the eagle generally seems to have enough to do in keeping clear of his sable foes, and every now and then gives a loud whistle or scream. If the eagle is at all alarmed when in pursuit of his prey, he instantly bears it off alive. Where alpine hares are plentiful, it is no unfrequent occurrence, when the sportsman starts one, for an eagle to swoop down and carry it off, struggling, with the greatest ease: in this case, he always allows the hare to run a long way out of shot before he strikes, and is apt to miss altogether. When no enemy is near, he generally adopts the more sure way of tiring out his game.

The method of the golden eagle in destroying red-deer calves is exactly akin to the *reflection* of the royston and carrion-crows, when breaking the shells of mussels. After pouncing upon the deer calf, and finding the impossibility of bearing it away to a distance, the eagle makes as short work as possible by climbing to a great height in the air, when its victim is dropped, and killed by a dash against the rocky ground. Instantly descending, it feeds voraciously, and never leaves off until either completely gorged or driven away. Next day it is pretty certain, about the dawn, to return for the remainder.

I once witnessed a touching instance of the attachment of an eagle to her young, which, like the child of some bloodthirsty chief, alone had the power to touch the single chord of tenderness and love in the heart of its cruel parent. I had wounded her mortally as she flew from her eyrie, quite unconscious of her having hatched an eaglet. Next day she returned to the foot of the rock, although not able to reach her nest—the feelings of a mother being stronger in her savage breast than either the sense of present pain or the dread of further danger.

There is often only one egg in the nest, but when there are two, one is generally addled. It is a curious fact that, in the year 1847, when there was a dreadful hurricane about the end of April, no eggs were laid in either the sea or golden eagles' eyries of the Black Mount Forest.

The enormous nests of the golden and sea eagles are pretty much alike ; the outer rim being composed of thick boughs, and the whole not unlike the shape of a large-sized round table. The golden-eagle always has its eyrie among rocks, while the erne chooses an old tree for inland incubation. On the bold rocky coast, where suitable trees are scarce, it follows the example of the mountaineer, and generally builds in the cliffs.

The colour of the golden-eagle differs very much; some are so dark as almost to justify the name of "the black eagle," which they are often called in the Highlands; in others, the golden tint is very bright; and many are of an even muddy-brown. I do not think that the age of the bird has anything to do with this, as I have seen young and old equally variable. The sure mark of a young one is the degree of white on the tail: the first year the upper half is pure, which gradually becomes less so by streaks of brown; about the third or fourth year no white is to be seen.

THE SEA-EAGLE

The sea-eagle is rather larger than the golden, and of a lighter brown. The bill, which is longer and broader, but not so hooked as the other, is of a dull yellowish white. The whole of the tail-feathers of the young ones are brown, when they gradually change to white, which is complete about the fourth year—the very reverse of the golden-eagle. The tail is also shorter, and the legs are not feathered to the toes, like the other; but quite enough to show that the bird was not intended to subsist by fishing, like the osprey, whose legs are bare to the thighs, which have only a thin covering of short feathers.

As this bird does not complete its mature plumage till the fourth season, there was much confusion regarding it even among scientific naturalists—some making out two, and others three distinct species. It has also been confounded with the bald-eagle of America, to which it bears a close resemblance when both are young—that is, before the American is dignified with a grey head, and the erne with a white train. These mistakes have been long ago cleared up, and the bird distinctly traced through all its maturing stages.

The habits of the sea-eagle differ materially from those of the golden. While the latter has its sole and grand resort in the Scottish mountains, the former has a very discursive range. It is a constant winter visitant to the Lowlands, and even as far as the south of England. I lately saw a young one shot on the banks of the Thames, and preserved by a bird-stuffer in Henley.

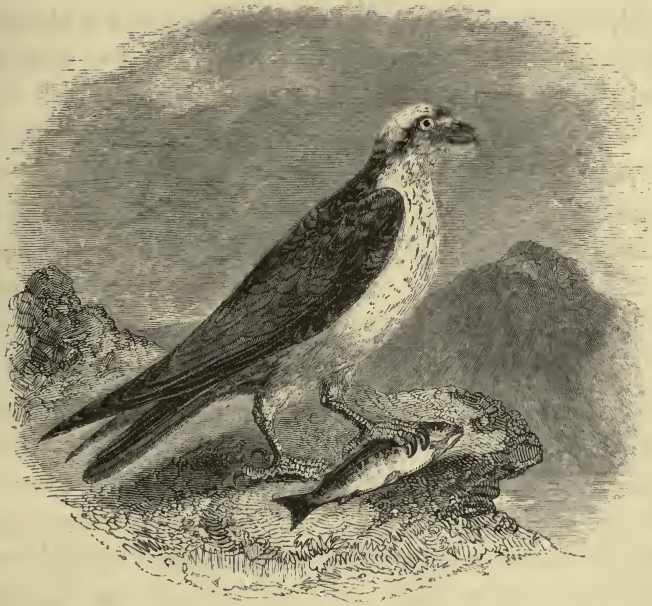
In the islands and wilder sea-coasts of Scotland, the erne may be met with the whole year, and is much less rare than the national bird. It is also more shy, which may perhaps be accounted for by its oftener coming in contact with man, its most hated foe.

A cursory glance will show how much more vulture-shaped both the bill and body of the sea-eagle are than those of the mountain one. She also partakes of the *nature* of the vulture, in having a less dainty palate than the golden-eagle, and, being not near so quick a game-destroyer, is more apt to devour what she does not strike down. Even carrion does not come amiss, especially in winter. Young sea-fowl and flappers are a favourite summer food, and when she builds inland, no more frequent prey is found in her eyrie than a young wild-duck before it is able to fly. We can thus trace her partiality for the moor-lochan or the sea-coast when choosing a habitation for her young—it is that she may feed them with the flappers and wild-fowl nestlings so plentifully scattered around, and so easily secured. When this supply fails, she is often fain to content herself with carcasses left upon the inland swamp, or cast up by the tide on the sea-shore. Most likely to prey upon *them* is the great motive for her winter wanderings when food grows scarce in the wilds.

THE OSPREY

The osprey, or water-eagle, frequents many of the Highland lochs; a pair had their eyrie for many years on the top of an old castle in a small island on Loch Lomond. I am sorry to say I was the means of their leaving that ruin, which they had occupied for generations.

It was their custom, when a boat approached the island, to come out and meet it, always keeping at a most respectful distance, flying round in very wide circles until the boat left the place, when, having escorted it a considerable way, they would return and settle on the castle. Aware of their habit, I went, when a very young sportsman, with a gamekeeper, and, having concealed myself behind the stump of an old tree, desired him to pull away the boat. The ospreys, after following him the usual distance, returned, and, gradually narrowing their circles, the female



THE OSPREY

at last came within fair distance; I fired, and shot her. Not content with this, the gamekeeper and I ascended the ruin, and, finding nothing in the nest but a large sea-trout, half-eaten, we set it in a trap, and returning, after two or three hours, found the male caught by the legs. They were a beautiful pair: the female, as in most birds of prey, being considerably the largest; the woodcut is a most correct likeness. The eggs of these ospreys had been regularly taken every year, and yet they never forsook their eyrie. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail into our bay on a calm summer night, and, flying round it several times, swoop down upon a good-sized pike, and bear it away as if it had been a minnow.

I have been told, but cannot vouch for the truth of it, that they have another method of taking their prey in warm weather, when fish bask near the shore. They fix one claw in a weed or bush, and strike the other into the fish; but I never saw them attempt any other mode of "leistering" than that I have mentioned: when they see a fish, they immediately settle in the air—lower their flight, and settle again—then strike down like a dart. They always seize prey with their claws, the outer toes of which turn round a considerable way, which gives them a larger and firmer grasp. Owls have also this power, to enable them with greater certainty to secure their almost equally agile victims; while the fern-owl has the toe turned round like a parrot, to assist it in the difficult task of catching insects in the air. But if this were the case with the others, although it might be an advantage in the first instance, it would very considerably weaken their hold when prey was struck.

I remember seeing another pair of ospreys on Loch Menteith that had their eyrie on the gnarled branch of an old tree. They became so accustomed to the man who let boats there that the female never even left her nest when he landed on the island, unless a stranger was with him. Once, when he returned home after a short absence, he saw one of them sitting on the tree, making a kind of wailing cry: suspecting all was not right, he rowed to the island, and found the female was missing, and the nest harried. They have never hatched there since: the male has been frequently seen, but he has never found another mate. When they had young, they did not confine their depredations to Loch Menteith, but used to go, in quest of prey, to the other lochs in the neighbourhood; and, in the evening, would fly down the glen, carrying a fish a foot long in their claws.

The nest of the osprey is lined with coarse water-plants and grasses: the outside fenced with thick sticks, some of them four inches round, and three feet and a half long—proof enough of the strength of its legs and wings. The eggs are as large as a hen's, with reddish-brown spots. The osprey is about the size of the herring-gull; the breast nearly white, spotted with brown; back and wings dull brown; the thighs very muscular; legs and claws, which are of a bluish flesh-colour, equally so.

THE KITE

Although abounding in the mountainous regions of Scotland, the kite is not confined to them; I have frequently met with it in the Lowlands, and it is common in Wales. To look at the elegance of its form and the grace of its movements, the keenness of its eye, the strength of its wings, and the aptitude of its claws for seizing prey, one would suppose the kite to be a very mischievous bird; but none of the hawk tribe are less so: even the buzzard, albeit no great adept, is much its superior in the art of destruction. The kite has no quickness of flight, yet is admirably fitted for his mode of life. Subsisting in a great measure on carrion and reptiles, his keen eye and unwearied wing are of the greatest service in discovering his food. Fish, when he can get it, he considers a dainty morsel, and he may be most successfully trapped with this bait. I found out his weak point by noticing the avidity with which he would devour the refuse of the net the day after a draught. I have watched him, with delight, sailing aloft with such perfect ease that the only perceptible motion was that of his tail, piloting him like a helm in his aërial circles—scrutinising, with his telescopic eye, every field and valley where he might hope to find a prey; and then, suddenly lowering his flight and lessening his circles, gradually alight upon some object, so small that it seemed scarcely possible he could have seen it from such a height.

Indeed, were the sight of the blue falcon and hen-harrier equal to that of the kite, their havoc upon our moors would be much greater than it now is; but their manner of seeking food is quite a contrast to his. In beating the ground for prey, they, especially the latter, seldom rise higher than twenty yards; but, when once it is sprung, their activity in pursuit is unrivalled. Perhaps I may here be excused for digressing so far as to mention an anecdote of the blue or peregrine falcon, showing that it will beat game out of the heather, and destroy it on the ground: many, I know, suppose it never strikes but on wing. When out breaking a young dog upon the Perthshire moors, I put up a grouse, which, after flying some distance, was pursued by a blue falcon. The poor grouse, seeing it had no chance, dropped down in the heather; but it was too late, the hawk was directly above. It immediately alighted, searched the heather for a minute, and presently the grouse fluttered out before it. I saw the chase for about ten yards, when they ran behind a hillock, and on my going up to the place, the falcon rose, and there lay the grouse decapitated.

But, to return to the kite—he is the shyest of birds; not even at the time of incubation can you often get a shot at him. I have frequently found the nests: they are much like the carrion-crow's, only larger and more impervious. They are lined with whatever the birds can pick up—such as old stockings, worsted gloves, wool, or indeed anything soft and warm. There are seldom more than three eggs, often only a couple. Kites generally build in the pine forests on the hills, and select a tree, with a thin bare stem, often very difficult to climb. I once concealed myself at the foot of a tree where a kite was sitting, in order to shoot it on its return to the nest—for they generally fly off at the most distant approach of an enemy. I was perfectly hid; and, after waiting nearly an hour, had an opportunity of witnessing the tact and cunning of the bird. The sun was shining warm upon the nest, or it would, most likely, not have kept me so long; at last I saw it flying round in very wide circles, which gradually narrowed: it then lighted upon a distant tree, and peering round in every direction, chose a nearer; and so on, until it came within three or four trees of the nest. It was now within shot; but I had unfortunately so placed myself as only to command the nest-tree, never doubting that it would light on this before it settled upon the nest. But I was out in my reckoning; as soon as it had tolerably reassured itself, it rose perpendicularly in the air, and came down upon its nest like a stone. The manner in which I was concealed prevented my getting a flying shot; so nothing remained but to fire through the nest, which proved a sufficient defence, as the kite flew away, and never returned. A few days after, I climbed the tree with some difficulty, and took two eggs, about the size of a hen's, with dusky-red spots.

OWLS

The "hoolet" is generally regarded by the common people with a sort of superstitious awe; and, indeed, there is that in its nature and habits which is apt to call forth feelings of pleasure or aversion, according to the temper and circumstances of the observer. For my own part, I have always regarded these secluded birds with peculiar favour, whether watching them flitting past in the twilight, with silky spectre-like flight, or reverently listening after nightfall to their melancholy oft-repeated cry. Even the harsh screech of the white owl is not without its charm; it appears to belong to the stillness of the night.

There are four species of owls which are emphatically British. For although the Snowy Owl has been occasionally seen and shot in the Shetland Isles, and the Great Eagle Owl is sometimes met with in the hilly districts of the North of England, yet they are so rare as scarcely to deserve the name of British birds. At all events, I know nothing of them except from report, and make it my rule never to run the risk of misleading by borrowed information. The Little Owl, I have been told, occasionally builds near Oxford, but this Lilliputian is quite as scarce as his Brobdignag kin. By our British owls, then, I mean the Tawny or Ivy Owl, the White or Barn Owl, the Long-eared and Short-eared Owls.

Ever since the old tower of my ancestors has been in ruins, a pair of tawny owls have made their habitation there. When a boy, I never failed to search out their nest, and sometimes tamed one of the young, which was pretty sure to be decoyed away by the parents as soon as it was able to fly. I often saw both father and mother come to their young one in the dusk, sometimes with food in their talons. These young owls were not at all particular what they ate, and devoured greedily raw meat of any kind, as well as fish; but I never saw them drink, and when offered water, they showed as much dislike to it as a cat. All day the young owl sat moping, with closed eyes, hissing and snapping his bill if disturbed; but, about nightfall, his visage became full and staring, and so quick was his sight, that I have only been made aware, by the animation of his solemn face, that the indistinct shadow, barely perceptible, was one of the old ones.

A pair of white owls were equally constant to a small cave among the precipitous rocks of Inch Tavannach, the most picturesque of the thirty-three islands on Loch Lomond. I have often climbed to this nest—by no means an easy task—to watch the growth of the young. There were sometimes four or five, whereas the brown owl had seldom more than two or three. Every fine evening the industrious white owl was to be seen skirting, with noiseless wing, the lawns and fields about Rossdhu, though nearly a mile from the island. I have often admired its expertness. Whenever it saw or heard a mouse, it settled in the air, like the osprey, and then, with its legs hanging down, ready to seize the moment it came to the ground, appeared rapidly to alight on its prey. The ways of the brown owl are different. It does not appear to hunt on the wing, but, perched on the top of the highest tree, hears the slightest rustling among the grass, and instantly descends upon its prey. The grotesquely large head of this bird, which also implies large eyes and ears, are no doubt wise provisions to enable it to see and hear acutely in the darkness from such a height. An instance of the very quick ear of the buzzard once came under my own notice, and is probably still more remarkable in the owl. This buzzard, scarcely full-fledged, was standing, erect as a drill-sergeant, in the midst of a noisy group, all distracting his attention, when a field-mouse was let out of a trap among the grass behind him. He listened, wheeled to the right about, instantly detected the little fugitive, and fastened his claw in its back.

I have been a good deal puzzled by the observations of an ingenious naturalist, which certainly are in direct opposition to my own. This gentleman resolved to see whether some young white owls, in his barn, could remain without food during the long summer day. He watched for about twelve hours, and avers that in that time the old birds fed them a hundred and fifty times. For my own part, I never *saw* the white owl hunting in the daytime, and I know a case in point regarding the tawny owl of quite contrary evidence. A pair had reared their brood in a magpie's nest, near the top of a thick pine-tree. I used often to go to look at the young, and thus drove the old ones from their dwelling. They were instantly pursued by a host of small birds, principally thrushes and blackbirds; and so surely did this happen, that the noise of their chattering was always a signal to me that the owls' nest was disturbed; whereas, if these owls had hunted for prey in the daylight to anything like the extent above mentioned, the uproar among the little birds would have been almost incessant. A gamekeeper told me that once, when he climbed the tree, one of the old owls darted down upon his head, and scratched him with its claws. I could scarcely give credit to this, as I always saw both birds on the watch when I invaded their castle, but they never attempted any defence.

When the hen bird was sitting upon her eggs, the male did not take up his quarters so near, for I have frequently seen him in the dusk fly across the bay from the opposite oak wood, and settle upon an aged plane-tree, uttering a low tremulous hoot. This was immediately answered by a sharp scream from his mate, who then left her nest and joined him on the tree.

Owls hoot all the year, except in the dead of winter; and even then, should the weather be calm and clear, they continue to mourn through the darkness of the night. During the severe winter of 1831, a fine old fellow, the very Tamburini of owls, haunted a clump of beeches, and, from one of the bare gnarled branches, I seldom missed hearing his fine tenor voice when I returned late from shooting. It struck me that he would make a first-rate specimen for my collection. As I passed one night with my duck-gun, I heard him in all his glory, so, creeping under the clump, I at last ascertained from which tree the sound proceeded; but to catch sight of the owl seemed impossible. Although he continued his cry at proper intervals, I strained my eyes for ten minutes, until I perceived, upon the very topmost branch, a little knob. I was slowly raising my gun, on the chance of this being my object, when it glided off, plainly showing that I was far more visible to him than he to me. He immediately settled upon another tree, and began to hoot. I was, however, more successful this time, for, upon getting under the tree, I detected him, perched as before, near the top. Taking very deliberate aim, I fired, and the poor owl fell half-way down the tree; but, being only wounded, he managed to seize a twig with his claws. I threw a few stones to dislodge him, but as he was not hit in the wings, he flew a little way and dropped. The night was so dark that I could not find him; but next morning I went to the spot, and, hearing a great clamour of jays and other birds, I guessed what was the matter, and soon detected my victim lying, persecuted and insulted, at the foot of his tree. He was, of course, at that season, in the finest feather; his back red-brown, like an autumn leaf. I have shot some both early and late in the season, whose plumage was quite brown, without any tawny tint. These, I rather think, are the young males and females, but not a distinct species.

If there is no ruin near, these owls will rear their young in a thick ivy-tree, or take possession of a magpie's nest, provided it is in some dark old fir-tree or cedar. They never construct one for themselves, but lay their eggs in a hole of the wall in ruins or outbuildings, only scraping a little sand or lime upon the stones. I have twice known the tawny owl hatch in the nest of a magpie, but never in any other bird's. The reason probably is, that the nests of crows, rooks, hawks, &c., are all roofless. Once or twice in summer, I have heard the tawny owl hoot in the day-time, but they never continue to do so above two or three times. It has then a most unnatural sound, and is, of course, not nearly so audible or imposing as during the stillness of night. I recollect once, when standing under a tree where an owl was hooting, being struck with the difference of the note from its sound at a distance. Far off, one wonders that so small a bird can emit such a volume of sound. The nearer you come, however, the less the sound appears; but what it loses in strength it gains in clearness and melody, which I suppose is the reason we hear it at such a distance. I have noticed this also in the sounds of other night-birds,* especially the nightingale's song, and the chur of the fern-owl, or night-jar. This last interesting compound of the swallow, the cuckoo, and the owl, is one of our latest spring arrivals. Its food consists of the larger night-insects; therefore, unless perched upon a rotten stump, engaged in its sleepy song, it is mostly on wing in pursuit of its prey. Wayward and capricious its movements certainly appear to the solitary dreamer in the gloaming, who sometimes wonders what the bird can mean by its eccentric wheels—not considering that it has to follow the fickle multitude of moths and beetles.

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* The landrail, in the summer nights, is an exception to this rule. The nearer you approach, the more harsh and grating is the vibration of its crake. Not so the cuckoo, as any one will find who has the hap to be under the tree where he is calling, in the dusk of a still summer eve.

I have often put up the night-jar, when grouse-shooting, and once discovered its pair of unfledged young close to the place it rose from. It frequents rough waste ground, on the borders of cultivation, and is very fond of slopes of bracken—hence the name of fern-owl. If found in the heather, there are always copses or woods near, no doubt for the supply of large night-insects they afford. When routed, by daylight, from a ferny dingle or a heathery brae, its flight is more like a leaf driven by the wind, than the spontaneous movements of a bird. Very different is its bearing in the dewy twilight of a cloudless day. It will then fly round the intruder, with a threatening attitude, often so near as almost to touch him—sometimes settling on the path, within a few yards of his feet. If traced, by its monotonous note, to a favourite perch, upon the branch of a decayed tree, it snaps its wings in taking flight, like a smiter pigeon, uttering a weak plaintive squeak. One that I winged, by opening its capacious mouth, and hissing like a cat, had a most formidable appearance; but it had no power to hurt even a child. The toes are toothed inside, to enable it to catch moths, cock-chafers, &c., as it seizes prey, like owls, with its feet.

If the winter nights are fine, and no moon, ivy owls may often be heard in full chorus at the grey of morning, which is sometimes continued till break of day. They take their station upon a few chosen perches, hooting some time upon each, and return night after night to the same places, whether a favourite tree, ruin, or outbuilding of any kind. Five years ago, I had a pair of tame tawny owls that lived in a tool-house in the garden. They hooted every fine spring and winter night. One was so tame that it always flew against my legs when I brought its food at nightfall. Sometimes it was so dark that I could not see it, but only heard a plaintive wail, and then felt a rush at my feet. If I was later than usual it perched on the balcony, uttering its weak cry. When I placed a bit of meat upon the table, it flew into the room, seized the meat, and, flitting into the darkness again, was no more seen that night. Both of these owls were very fond of earth-worms, and devoured great numbers at a time. If given too much liver, they hid the overplus under a bush, or in a box border, but never covered it up like a fox or dog. Both came every evening at dusk to drink at their water dish, which operation was performed after the manner of hens. I have seen them continue sipping at intervals for ten minutes at a time. After a fall of snow in early spring, I watched both rolling upon it, occasionally taking a small peck, which perhaps served instead of water. I rather think the tool-house, from being closely shut up, with only two small holes for air, was too hot for birds of such warm plumage—hence their thirst. These owls were not of the same brood; one (the male) was a bright tawny, the other sober brown. After remaining eight months at large, these most interesting pets took their departure about the time of incubation. Their hooting was occasionally heard some distance off, but they never returned to their former abode.

I have now supplied their place by another pair of white or barn owls. They are, however, kept close prisoners by a wire door, which admits plenty of air into the tool-house. The habits of these owls are less nocturnal than those of the ivy ones. They frequently feed in the day-time, but I have never seen them drink, although supplied with water. They *do* hoot, but very rarely. I heard one six times in succession, and then it ceased. Their music is a little different from the brown owl's. It is only one prolonged cadence, lower and not so mournful as the first hoot of the tawny fellow. They never utter the second juggling whoop of that owl, at least that I have heard. In fact, the habits of the white owl are to be so constantly on wing, beating hedgerows and fields for mice, that he seldom allows himself time for any nocturnal melody, except what he can utter during his silky flight. This is a most harsh scream, and has rightly dubbed him the screech owl. My tame ones very often give a sort of complaining squeak like a very young pig. This is repeated sometimes for hours. It may be that they are dissatisfied at not being allowed the free use of their wings. In the day-time they sometimes snore as loud as a plethoric gentleman of the olden time. Some naturalists say that this snoring is the complaint of the young in the nest for food. How comes it, then, that my two old ones, which have as much food as they can consume, are guilty of these nursery manners?

I have before noticed that the white owl comes out earlier than the brown, and may frequently be seen hunting for prey whenever the sun's glare is a little mellowed by the first shade of evening. Their eyes, not being so large as the ivy owl's, may collect fewer rays in the darkness, but this is made up by a clearer vision in light. They are evidently more expert mousers than the brown, which may in part account for the latter's destructiveness among young game. I recollect nearly all the young pigeons in my father's dove-cot being harried by a pair of brown owls. It was some months before the robbers were discovered.

The wings of the ivy owl are not so long in proportion to its body and tail as those of the white; neither is its flight so buoyant, although equally soft and spectre-like. It is thus less formed for beating a large extent of country for mice, and must often content itself with promiscuous feeding. Mice, on the contrary, seem to be almost the exclusive food of the barn owl; and he is a lucky farmer whose barn is tenanted by them. Some aver that the young will die unless they have a constant supply of mice. I have two living proofs against this assertion, which were brought up principally upon raw meat.

A tame white owl supersedes the necessity of a cat. My little boy had one a few years ago kept in the kitchen. Its dexterity in catching mice was the wonder of all who saw it. Once, when a mouse had been troublesome in the night, he darkened the window next morning, and brought up his owl. In a very short time there was a crash, a faint squeak, and the mouse was never heard again. It used sometimes to startle strangers, by coming down upon their shoulders with the noiseless spirit-like flight which enabled it to surprise the mice ;—when they looked round they encountered a sage face peering inquisitively into theirs. The top of the wings of white owls are beautifully pencilled, and make the best artificial white moths.

The habits of the long-eared owl are pretty much like those of the white, only it is oftener met with in wild unfrequented places, and is also more apt to perch and rest for awhile, when seeking prey. I have shot them in mistake for woodcocks, flying between me and the sky after nightfall. They skim copses and hedgerows exactly like the white owl, but do not come out so early. I have sometimes put them up in open daylight, out of the heather, where there were neither trees nor rocks. But they are more often flushed from some thick fir-tree, which seems a favourite retreat, especially if surrounded by heath or brushwood. A very fine specimen of this bird was brought me one summer. It had been entangled in a net placed over some seeds, to protect them from the small birds. The mice were also feeding on these seeds, and *they* of course attracted the owl. It was a beautiful little creature, with its bright eyes of yellowish red, and small face animated by fear. The cry of this owl is neither so loud nor harsh as that of the white.

Last summer, I noticed a pair of young long-eared owls at a bird-fancier's in Edinburgh. Thinking that they would be hospitably received and well treated by the possessors of the tool-house, I bought and ceremoniously introduced them to each other. Next morning I perceived the long-ears cowering at the farthest end of the house, and directing timid glances to their host and hostess. Still fancying they would become better friends, I paid no attention, although I saw some *brown* feathers ominously scattered about. Two nights after, the white ones pecked them both to death! Such barbarity would have been quite in keeping with the unkindly disposition of the hawk; but one was quite unprepared for it in the sedate and sagacious owl.

From the small hawk head of the short-eared owl, it most likely hunts on the wing, though I have never seen it search for prey. I have several times started it in the daytime, during autumn and winter, from tangled heathery dells where there are fir or yew trees. Pennant says they arrive in this country in October. My brother-in-law shot one on the Arroquhar Moors shortly after the twelfth of August. It rose out of the heather, and, I believe, was pointed by one of his dogs. I had this bird stuffed. I once pursued another from tree to tree, on Inch Connachan, about the beginning of September. It appeared more timid than any of the other owls, and would not let me come within a hundred yards. Mice seemed to have been its attraction to the island, for I remember that, after it had been planted to some extent, so much injury was done by the mice that a boat-load of cats were imported on purpose to destroy them! There are a few fine old Scotch firs on the island, and out of one of these flew the owl, always winging his way straight to another, quite heedless of the glaring sun.

I never heard of the short-eared owl's nest being found in the West Highlands, so conclude it must be a bird of passage there.

The long-eared owl sometimes rears its young in the Castle Rock of Edinburgh; one was shot last autumn close to Portobello. The barn owl also hatches every year in Craigmillar Castle, about a mile from the city. The male takes up his quarters during the day in a niche of the old dining-hall. When the curious stranger enters, he turns a sleepy face, and then quietly takes himself off by the hole where a window was. My tame ones always show the same dislike of intrusion during their nap. If I move my head from side to side at their wire door, they at once imitate me most absurdly, and continue to make a pendulum of their heads so long as I set them the example.

On taking possession of my present residence, Sonachan House, Loch-Awe-side, I was much annoyed to find that a colony of ivy owls (whose long abode in the roof might surely have entitled them to nine points of the law) had been shot as *vermin* by a surly gamekeeper, as a blind for laziness. Had they fallen into my hands, they should certainly have been sacred birds.

WILD PIGEONS

There are four kinds of dove found in a wild state in this country, the largest of which is the ring-dove or cushat, common all over the kingdom. This bird, called also the wood-pigeon, is thought to migrate by many, but, if so, multitudes stay behind. Perhaps one reason for the supposition may be, that numbers congregate in the autumn and beginning of winter, under beech-trees, to feed upon the mast, and when this is all devoured they separate in search of other food. The first signal for the flocking of wood-pigeons is the yellowing of the grain—they then choose the ripest part of the field, if possible near the centre, as being least accessible, and generally keep to the same place. When the acorns and beech-nuts fall, they greedily feed upon them, and I have sometimes taken about a dozen large acorns out of the crop of one bird. The flock are certain to return morning and evening to feed under any clump of old beeches in the neighbourhood of their haunts. First one alights, cautiously looking all round—then another, and so on, until they drop down half-a-dozen at a time. There are often two hundred in one flock.

By building a wigwam constructed of twigs, and not disturbing the doves afterwards for a week, they will become quite fearless, and feed close to it: my anxiety to shoot a pure white one which made its appearance among the rest suggested this plan to me. Many people saw this rarity and fancied it a tame pigeon. I, however, examined it with my telescope, and plainly saw that it was a white ring-dove. Its size and shape of tail clearly showed this, but the most certain mark was a *blue* ring instead of the white one. Notwithstanding my efforts, I could not succeed in killing this bird, and only got one random shot, about eighty yards off.

The sleeping place of this flock was a small belt of tall trees, half a mile from their feeding ground. I constantly saw the white dove perched near the top of one of the highest trees, (another undeniable proof of its wood origin,) and manœuvred to obtain a shot, but was completely baffled by the wary bird. Should, however, the night resting-place of ring-doves be known, a few may easily be killed by keeping one side of the plantation and sending some one to make a little noise on the other. They will continue flying overhead, quite within distance, until the reports of your gun have driven them all from their retreat. Many a one have I bagged in this way, as I generally gave the pigeon woods a trial when returning home in the evening. A bad shot may have good sport by waiting for them at dusk under these roosting trees. The only caution necessary is, not to move your gun until the birds have assured themselves that the coast is clear and no enemy lurking near. As they drop in singly, each dove peers round in all directions before settling; whereas, at feed, the first few that alight act as spies to the bevy, the rest heedlessly following. If one should chance to fly up, the whole instantly take wing with a noise like distant thunder.

When frost and snow set in, the last resource of the ring-dove is the turnip-field. Even in deep snow the turnip-tops are not beyond reach, and are generally its staple food in winter. I rather think these doves never devour the turnip itself, although wild-geese do, and even ducks when pinched with hunger. In a country where there are few turnip-fields, ring-doves are seldom seen in large flocks after the beech-mast is consumed. But in the lowland counties, they continue to resort to them in multitudes until they pair in spring. I could never see any diminution in their numbers, nor signs of migration. When they begin to feed on the turnip-tops, their flesh is bitter and ill-flavoured, but the beech-mast and acorns improve it much.

Early in February, should the weather be fine and sunny, the ring-dove begins to coo. At first there are only a few low notes in the morning and evening, but very soon this soothing sound is to be heard with greater power from every corner of the coppice. The doves may also be seen rising in the air to a considerable height, and then allowing themselves to fall with outstretched wings, repeating this motion several times, as if in exquisite enjoyment of the genial season. The coo of the ring-dove continues in a less degree during the summer, but chiefly in the morning and evening. They build very early—the nests being generally about half-way up the evergreen trees, and composed of a few twigs so loosely put together that you may see through them. Many have two broods in the year, but I should imagine not all—at least if we may judge from the decrease of those that coo and soar in summer and autumn. Numbers of branchers scarcely able to fly are to be met with in August and September. I have also found their nests with young in June—but most likely these were birds that have had their spring hatching destroyed. The nest of this bird is easily discovered, and most people who have lived in the neighbourhood of hanging woods are familiar with its sudden crash through the branches, when startled from its eggs.

Five years ago I had some fancy pigeons of various kinds, croppers, tumblers, fan-tails, and carriers. It was a pleasure to feed them every morning after breakfast. One day a ring-dove most unexpectedly appeared, and claimed a share of the barley. At first he was rather shy, but in a week or so became the boldest of the company. For two months, "the stranger," as he was still called, was never once absent at morning feed. He always flew over the wall into the garden where the dovecot was placed. Sometimes, after filling his crop, he lingered with the other pigeons nearly the whole day, but never stayed over night. I had the curiosity to watch him in the twilight, in order to find out his sleeping quarters. After several "doubles," he at last roosted on an old apple pollard in a neighbouring garden, returning every night to the same branch of the same tree. At last he became tame enough to pick grain out of my hand. As he was evidently a bird of the year, I rather think he must have been taken from the nest, and kept in a cage, but, having made his escape, hunger may have forced him to beg a meal. Poor fellow! His departure was as sudden and mysterious as his advent. We missed him one morning, and he was never seen again.

The next in size to the ring-dove is the wild pigeon, or stock-dove. Considerable mistakes seem to have arisen about this bird, some fancying it altogether migratory, and others confounding it with the rock-dove, and tracing it as the origin of the domestic pigeon. The habits of the stock-dove are very different from those of the latter. They are always in summer met with in pairs, perching upon old trees, and building their nests in the decayed hollows. I found two myself in the grounds of Park-place in Berkshire, where a few stock-doves flock and roost with the ring-doves every winter. I had several times seen one of the pairs before the hatching time. They were very wild, and flew more rapidly than ring-doves. About a month after, I stumbled upon the nest in the fork of an aged tree. It was only about ten feet from the ground; and I might have shot the female at any time flying off—the other nest was near the top of an ivy-girt birch. These birds, as well as most of the pigeon tribe, lay two eggs, generally a male and a female. Hence the Scotch phrase, when there are only a son and daughter of a family, "a doo's nest."

The stock-dove is gregarious in winter, like the ring-dove, and feeds on beech-mast, &c., in the same way. They are not found farther north than the midland counties of England. They are beautifully shaped, a blueish grey colour, the males having a fine golden neck. Unlike the other wild pigeons, their voice is a *failure*, being only a sort of grumbling sound.

The rock-dove (the *true* wild pigeon) is smaller than the preceding, and has a white spot above the tail. I have often met with them among the rocky caverns of the coast. They fly with great rapidity, which may account for the name "blue rocks," applied by the admirers of that cruel sport, pigeon-shooting, to their fleetest birds. Both in the Caithness and Morayshire cliffs, I noticed some brown and light-coloured; these, most likely, had joined their wild associates from some pigeon-house, although there were none within the distance of several miles. This is the more likely, as the habits of the rock-doves are exactly those of the domestic species. Their nests are never fixed in trees, and, when tame pigeons leave the dovecot, they always build in similar places—viz., old ruins, and sheltered rocks and caverns. In fact, I have little doubt they are the same bird in a wild and tame state.

One word for the turtle, that fairest of doves, and most welcome harbinger of spring. There is a plaintive murmur in its coo, connected as it is with the idea of constancy and truth, that has made it in all ages, *par excellence*, the bird of love and song. One peculiarity of this gentle creature is its concealing itself among the most impervious places of the wood, so that it is not easily seen. It generally builds near the top of thick evergreen trees, and, as it does not come to this country till the end of April, and returns in September, it only rears one brood, taking its journey as soon as the young ones are able to travel.

On first arriving here, they often frequent the green corn-fields in pairs; at the time of incubation, however, they keep more to the woods, where nothing but the coo betrays their retreat. In some parts of England, I am told, they are gregarious after they have reared their young, and frequent the corn and pea-fields like other doves. But I have never seen above four or five in company. I once traced out one by its coo, and had the satisfaction of seeing him perched on the topmost branch of an old oak, lowering his head at intervals, and pouring forth his tender notes. When partridge-shooting in Suffolk, a pair of turtles rose off the stubble, and settled upon one of the top branches of a high tree. I continued my range in their direction, and killed both at a shot. Neither had the patch on the side of the neck, so were most likely hatched that year.

Turtles are often met with in the northern counties of England, and are not unfrequently found in Scotland. My brother shot one in Dumbartonshire a few years ago. It was evidently very young.

ROCK AND RIVER OUSELS

ALTHOUGH the rock ousel, as his name imports, is fond of rocks and precipices, and commonly builds among them, yet a pair may often be met with haunting ferny brakes with only a few scattered stones, upon which they delight to perch. When disturbed, they fly from stone to stone, uttering a very grating chirp, which seems to be a note of defiance. This summer (1842) a good number of them came down from the hills to the garden at Lennie, and did much damage to the fruit, especially the currants. The gardener shot several, which he brought to me. The ring of the males was very dusky, and in some there were brown feathers interspersed. The females had no white ring at all. They were timid birds—much more so than the thrushes and blackbirds, their fellow-depredators—and it required some caution to get a shot at them.

A nest was found in the spring, near the foot of a thick bush, on the bank of a rocky brook. They reared their young ones undisturbed. I think it not unlikely that the greater number of those that frequented the garden in summer were birds of that year, although the crescent of one shot by the gardener, evidently an old male, was far less pure than in spring, and certainly not so fully pronounced. A pair had their nest on the crags of Arthur's Seat, a few summers ago, and I often watched them with interest. The crescent in both, particularly the male, was silvery as the moon's, and the birds were not wild. Their song is pleasing, though melancholy. This bird has always been a great favourite with me, most likely from association, for it loves "the unplanted places."

The little Dipper, or river ousel, is no less attractive. There is a look of loneliness about this little inhabitant of the flood like the solitudes it frequents. Often, in the deepest and most tangled recess of the mountain-burn, or perched upon some gaunt stone by the side of the muirland loch, the water ousel, when disturbed by some chance explorer of nature, will fly cheerily forward, and, re-settling upon the clear water, seems, by the buoyancy of its little movements, to try to impart its happiness to the thoughtful visitant.

The food of this bird consists of water insects, the roe of fish, &c.; but its bill does not seem formed for seizing the small fry, as the kingfisher does. It is also incapable of feeding at any great depth, from the want of web feet, on which account it generally chooses the shallows where the salmon and trout roe is deposited. I have twice seen it feed upon some very minute substance about a foot from the surface, but whether animalculæ or not, it was impossible to ascertain. The first time, when after wild-ducks on the river Tay, I saw a motion in a clear still creek, and, when I cautiously peeped over the bank, I discovered the little bird under water, rowing itself both with wings and legs, at the same time pecking at something, apparently with as much ease as a barn-door fowl would devour a handful of grain. It was so intent on its food that I was not perceived for a few seconds; but, on looking up to see if the coast was clear, it saw me at once through the water, rose to the surface and flew away, as with one and the same motion. Another winter, my notice was attracted by just such a ripple in Lennie Water, and again I detected the ousel at his secret meal. The water in both cases was very bright, but, without a miscroscope, it could not be discovered whether the delicacies on which it regaled were vegetable substances or some minute water insects.

In spring and summer these birds generally are found singly or in pairs, but in winter they often congregate in some favoured river, and may then be seen in great numbers. They do not always select the places where fish are most abundant, as we should imagine from their living so much on the roe. I stumbled upon a newly-flown nest of these birds, when fishing the brook that separates Loch Katrine from Achray, and could easily have caught some of them; but I rather amused myself by watching their unformed bows and curtseys—copied, no doubt, from the parents, who were flitting up and down in great alarm.

The water ousel is a hardy bird, especially for one that does not migrate in summer; and it is a novelty, when land and water are bound by an iron frost, and,

> "seized from shore to shore,
> The whole imprisoned river growls below,"

to hear this little bird, perched upon the frozen mass, strike up its cheerful song. Not another note is then to be heard, which gives it the more imposing effect,—like the nightingale at midnight, making dreariness more dreary by contrast. The pipe of this river-minstrel is not unlike the first attempts of the thrush in early spring, when a cold wind a little checks its power.

A friend of mine had the good hap to shoot a white ousel on the banks of the Clyde. I narrowly inspected it, and could not detect a single dark feather. Legs, beak, and all had exactly the same cream-coloured shade.

I have several times been fairly cheated by the water ousel, and had a fruitless stalk for ducks through its means. Seated at a distance, upon a small stone, it is often difficult, even with one's glass, not to mistake it for the head, and the stone for the body of a duck. If the ousel does not fly, his motions appear exactly like the duck moving its head. His restless disposition, however, seldom allows him to remain long enough on the stone to keep up the deception, and, generally before commencing operations, you see the duck's head fly off. I have noticed this bird with a large worm in its beak, which it had picked out of the banks of a mossy brook, high among the hills, its summer residence. During the severity of winter, it always prefers larger streams, its favourite food being the spawn of fish, and minute water-insects.

THE SPIRIT OF GLENCROE

WHO has not heard of the Pass of Glencroe? The hills rising perpendicularly on both sides, grey to the top with immense masses of rock, that look as if an infant's touch would roll them from their insecure basis. It was my hap to live for a summer close to this savage gorge. When the weather was dull and rainy, and the clouds hung low upon the mountain-tops, the frowning grandeur of the scene could scarcely fail to depress the most buoyant spirits; and even when the day was fine and clear, a feeling of awe at least was inspired.

When I first came to the neighbourhood of Glencroe it was in early summer, and, of course, the Scotch mists were thick and frequent; but, overlooking the greater angling attractions of Loch Lomond and its neighbouring streams, I generally took advantage of the fine days to wander, fishing-rod in hand, up this lonely and favourite strath, to the little moor-loch at its head.

The "Lochan Rest," so called from being close to the top of the glen, where a stone is set up with the well-known inscription, reminding the weary wayfarer to " rest and be thankful," does not hold out many inducements for fishing. The trout, although well fed, and of a very uncommon colour, are not large; and it is most probable that the " lochan," but for its situation, would have been seldom visited by me. After loitering up the glen, where was nothing to relieve the dreariness of the scene but the plaided shepherd, accompanied by his uncouth half wild-looking dog, I generally spent an hour or two in filling my creel, and then slowly retraced my steps. The lochan was immediately under one of the most stupendous precipices in the pass, round the base of which the angler must try his casts.

In desolate regions like this, where the silence is only interrupted by the hoarse croak of the raven, or some other equally wild inhabitant of the mountains, the slightest sound, which otherwise might pass unheeded, will often arrest the attention. Such was the case with me on my first excursion to Lochan Rest. While screwing together my fishing-rod, I heard a low and peculiar whistle from the precipice above. Fancying it might be some shepherd, I took little notice; but as the same strange call was repeated at intervals during the whole time I was fishing, my curiosity was somewhat excited; I strained my eyes along the crags in every direction, but nothing was to be seen.

A few days after, I again slung my fishing-basket on my shoulder for Lochan Rest, and I must confess that the invisible tenant of the cliff had some share in attracting me back so soon. Scarcely had I wet my line, when I heard the mysterious whistle, which continued as before until I left the loch. I tried to ascertain the exact spot from whence the sound proceeded, but was only the more baffled, as I had no doubt it was from a perpendicular and totally inaccessible rock. At last I became so accustomed to it, that I should as soon have expected to miss the trout from the loch as this wild note from the hill.

Summer was now advancing, and several engagements prevented my returning to the lochan during my residence in the neighbourhood; but about the same season, two years after, when showing a friend some of our Highland scenery, amongst other places I took him to Glencroe, and, in walking past the little loch, I almost started when I heard the well-remembered whistle! I had before given up hope of finding out the cause, and it had even occurred to me that it might possibly be some echo occasioned by the wind among the rocks. With this absurd solution I was fain to rest satisfied; and it was some years after, when passing a steep and craggy hill in Perthshire, that the true one was discovered. A small bird flew out before me, and, perching on a detached piece of rock, struck up its wild peculiar note. It was the Spirit of Glencroe! With cautious steps I wound round the crag to get a nearer view of the bird, when I caught sight of its white breast, and, immediately detecting the *rock-ousel*, felt sorry that my charm was dissolved.

I had once or twice in spring met with this bird on the moors, but had never heard it make any call beyond a harsh grating chirp.

The little incident mentioned above gave rise to the following stanzas, which I may be excused for inserting :—

The heather-bell was blooming fair,
And gaily waved the yellow broom,
And many a wild-flower bright and rare
Lent to the breeze its choice perfume.

But lonely, lonely was the scene,—
Grim rose the heights of dark Glencroe,
And, though the sunbeam smiled between,
They scarce returned a kindlier glow.

Above me frowned the jutting rock,
The wimpling burn beside me played ;
Around me stared the mountain flock,
And asked—" Who dared their rights invade ?"

A whistle strikes my startled ear !
A pipe of shrillest, wildest tone ;
But human footstep, far or near,
None could I see—I stood alone !

Still and anon, with every breeze,
I caught that sound so strangely wild ;
And who may tell what visions please
The wayward mood of Fancy's child !

Oft I returned, when skies were fair,
To ply my fisher's task below,
And long the viewless tenant there
I named the Spirit of Glencroe !

Once more this thrilling call I heard,
  As far I climbed the misty hill;
Then past me flew a little bird,
  With that same note, so wild and shrill!

Spirit I deemed it long, and still,
  With its white breast and airy form,
It sat like spirit of the hill,
  Above the cloud, and mist, and storm!

There is a stone which marks Glencroe,
  To weary travellers known the best;
It bids them, ere they farther go,
  Tarry a-while by Lochan Rest.

Hast *thou* no message, herald lone,
  Perched on thy lofty turret brow?
"Rest and be thankful," says the stone,
  Bird of the rocks! what sayest *thou?*

"Rest to the weary—rest for men—
  Through earth's dark pass worn wand'rers they—
Rest is the Spirit of our Glen,
  But ah! that rest lies far away!

"'Tis far away, 'tis far away!
  Above my watch-tower lift your eyes;
Rest, weary wand'rers, rest ye may,
  But rest *not* till you reach the skies!

LENNIE BURN

How many recollections does the name of Lennie Burn arouse! None that have ever trod those pleasant paths, or threaded the devious track of that enchanting glen, will wonder that memory lingers there with fond delight. The ivied rocks, the fragrant woodbine, and countless varieties of wild flowers, combined with the rare exotics which the hand of art had scattered there,—above all, the symphony of the brook gurgling within its rocky bed, and ending with a fall, which, if not so wild as Bracklinn, surpasses it both in height and beauty. Many a sultry summer day have I wandered among these shady walks, listening to the sleepy burn, or watching the little trout suck down an occasional insect from among the myriads flickering about the surface. "The pool," a sort of reservoir, and head-quarters of the burn-trout, always particularly engaged my attention. I soon learned to distinguish every inmate, not only from its size and hue, but also its temper and disposition. Some were shy; others, greedy and tyrannical; and these several qualities were often exhibited so plainly, that we might learn a lesson even from a fish.

There was a small pond, formed by an old course of the burn, which, from time to time, was another source of speculation and amusement. It had a constant supply of fresh water from a spring, and although the inhabitants of this little basin were completely imprisoned, yet they were in no want of sustenance, from the bottom being soft and muddy, covered with leaves and decomposed vegetable matter. The place was surrounded by trees, which rained down abundance of flies, caterpillars, &c., for two or three trout, which, no one knows how, had found their way in.

During the latter end of autumn, and the whole of winter, no sign of life is to be seen in this retired standing pool; but about the middle of February, if the weather is mild and the sun warm, a slight shaking noise lets me know that the frogs have awaked from their winter sleep. By peeping cautiously over the bank, screening myself behind the trees, I discover one or two heads above the surface, which, sometimes singly, and then in chorus, emit the tremulous croak which had excited my attention. Should the weather still continue warm, every day adds to the number of heads, and the spawn rapidly accumulates in a shallow corner of the well. The croaking is now so loud as to be heard at some distance, not merely from the increase of voices, but that each note acquires double force, the more warm and genial the day. When the cold returns, as in our springs it is so apt to do, many of the frogs seek their winter covering, and the croak of those that remain dwindles into a faint treble, instead of their full diapason. A touch of frost will cause all the frogs to disappear, and make the top of the spawn as white as an oyster. But the first warm sun and mild air brings them to the surface again, and restores the spawn to its original colour. It is then most curious to observe their gambols, jumping and tumbling about like boys at *leap-frog* —and no doubt the origin of this favourite game of the play-ground. After a time the frogs all leave the pool, and little black eggs are formed in the spawn, which gradually increase in size until little tadpoles emerge.

But now a more interesting visitor may sometimes be seen. The first burst of spring has brought into life the earlier insects, and with them the subtle active trout. In this little pond I have counted three; two of them very small, the other about six inches long. My attention was first directed to them one fine July evening, when I saw what appeared to be fish rising. I crept forward, and soon perceived the larger trout amidst a crowd of summer insects, some buzzing about the surface, and others settling upon it. He was sucking them down lazily and at intervals, like a finished gourmand at a satisfactory dinner. But here the resemblance ends; for, upon my stepping forward, he darted to the other side of the tank, with a celerity very unlike the respected gentleman aforesaid when leaving his ample board. In my evening walks I seldom omitted to take a peep at the little pond, and soon discovered that my spotted friend was not solitary; and one or other of them was almost always to be seen during the season.

Spring came round again, and I resolved to watch the first appearance of these trout. Accordingly, as soon as I noticed fish rising in the streams, I went to the pond several times a-day. It was not, however, till the beginning of April that I perceived the largest trout looking very heavy and dull, but making no attempt to feed. I watched it for a quarter of an hour, when, contrary to its usual custom of darting among the bushes at the opposite side for a hiding place, it sunk down among the leaves and mud, head foremost, like an eel. The manner of its passing the winter was now evident, and as the evening was chilly, it had again sought the warmth of its muddy quarters.

A third inmate of this little pool excited my curiosity and interest more than either of the others. During the warm summer nights several large eels were constantly disporting among the soft mud, particularly after rain. Each had its corner of the pond, and they seldom invaded the other's territories. They were five in number; two rather larger than the others, one of them a yellowish green, the other a dark brown; indeed they were all of different hues, and the shade of their colour was my first distinguishing mark. This leads me to suppose that fish do not *always* take their colour from that of the water, or from the quality of the bottom. I know it is often the case, especially with trout, and I have seen fish caught on a mossy soil, nearly black, while those taken on a clear golden sand were bright yellow, though in the same loch.

But to return to my friends, the eels. It was nothing uncommon to see several of them peeping out of a separate retreat in their own premises. The head of one perhaps from behind a decayed leaf, the whole body of another laid alongside a piece of stick, which it so nearly resembled as to be scarcely distinguishable. Indeed it required some practice to perceive them at all, and I have been nearly a minute before discovering one, though several were in sight. Having some curiosity to find out whether any more eels would get into this place should the original occupants be taken away, I, by means of a hook and strong gut-line, at different times pulled out the whole five. They took the bait readily, but it was rather difficult to hook them, as they held it for some time across their mouth without swallowing, after the manner of pike. I observed that these eels were more shy than those I had taken in lochs and rivers, but in excellent condition. They were never replaced, however, during the time that I had opportunity of watching. The trout remained unmolested, and seemed also to thrive.

During sultry weather, the eels often rested the lower part of their bodies on the mud, and raised their noses to the top of the water; when in this position they had a very serpent-like appearance, and might have been easily mistaken for snakes. I never saw this done by eels before, but, if noticed in the like attitude by a Loch-Lomond sage, it might, perhaps, account for one of the three wonders ascribed to that water, viz.: Fish without fins, waves without wind, and a floating island.

THE MOUNTAIN-FOX

OCCASIONALLY, while ranging for roes, the hounds come on the track of a hill-fox; they will then show even more than their usual keenness, and open with greater ardour. As the same passes often serve for both, the roe-hunter has sometimes an opportunity of shooting this wily destroyer. Such a chance only occurs when prey is scarce on the mountains, and he leaves them to seek it in the woods below; I therefore do not recommend having a charge of smaller shot in one barrel—a plan adopted by some.

Any one who sees the hill-fox bounding along within fair distance, will immediately be struck with the difference of his appearance from that of the small cur, which never leaves the low grounds. The mountain-fox is a splendid-looking fellow: even the sneaking gait of the enemy of the poultry-yard has, in a great measure, left him; he seems to feel that he breathes a freer air, and lives by more noble plunder. He is extremely destructive to all game within his range, and the havoc he makes among the hill-lambs is a serious loss to the farmer. He will also not unfrequently attack and destroy full-grown sheep. To prevent the increase of these freebooters, a man is appointed for each district of the Highlands, called "the fox-hunter," whose business it is to search out and destroy the young litters, in which he is ably seconded by the farmers and shepherds.

The place selected by the mountain-fox for rearing its young is widely different from that of his pigmy relation of the Lowlands. Unlike the latter, who chooses an old badger-earth or drain, in the midst, perhaps, of a pheasant preserve, the hill-fox prefers some wild and craggy ravine on the top or side of a mountain, far removed from the haunts of men. In spring, these places are all narrowly searched by the shepherds, and the den (for you cannot call the clefts of the rock an earth) often detected by the quantities of wool, feathers of grouse, &c., scattered about the entrance. These are the remains of prey brought to the young; for as soon as they are able to eat flesh, the old ones leave them during the day, bringing them food morning and evening.

When the litter is discovered, "the fox-hunter" is brought into requisition (who often at this time has more calls than he can answer); his terriers are sent into the den, and the young massacred; a watch is then set to command a view all round, in order, if possible, to shoot the old ones when they return. I have been told by people thus employed, that they had no idea of the proverbial cunning of the fox until they saw it shown upon such occasions. Although the place has been perfectly bare, the old ones have come unperceived within ten yards of the party, and were at last only discovered by the straining of the dogs on the leash. I have often heard the watchers say, that the ease with which "the tod" avoids their faces, and skulks behind their backs, is most surprising. If the foxes escape the guns, as they commonly do, "the streakers"* are slipped upon them, and, if not then run down, nothing remains to be done but again to set the watch. So long as the old ones are prevented from entering, they will return morning and evening for several days; but, should either of them get access, and miss the young, they come back no more. At those times of the year when there are no litters, the usual way of hunting is to place a man, with a streaker or greyhound ready to slip, upon the tops of the neighbouring hills; the fox-hunter then draws all the correis, crags, &c., where they prowl. Should Reynard be started, he is almost sure to take a course over the top of one of the hills where the men are posted. He comes up all blown, and, if observed, (which, I must say, is seldom the case,) has a fresh streaker slipped upon him, which ought to run him down.

I may here give an account of a hunt I had with one of my brothers, after as fine a mountain-fox as ever prowled upon the wild moor. We had gone on a roe-hunting expedition to a high and steep hill in Dumbartonshire, the lower part of which was a larch and oak copse, the centre a large pine-wood, and the top covered with long heather.

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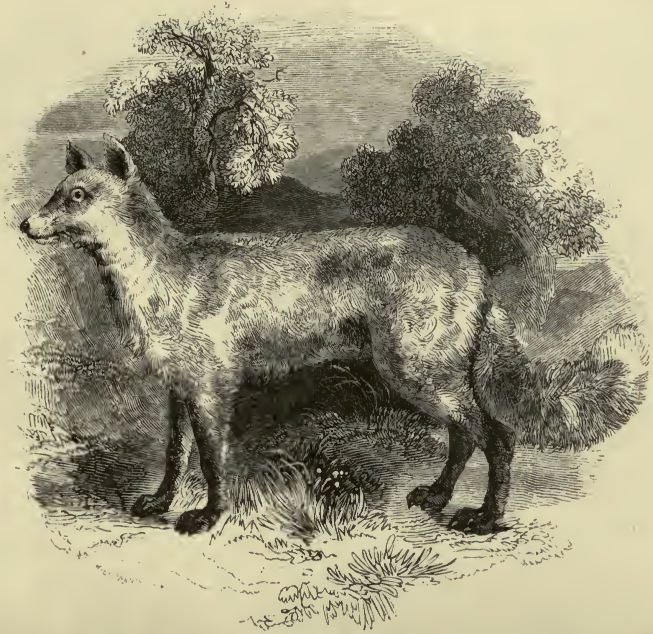
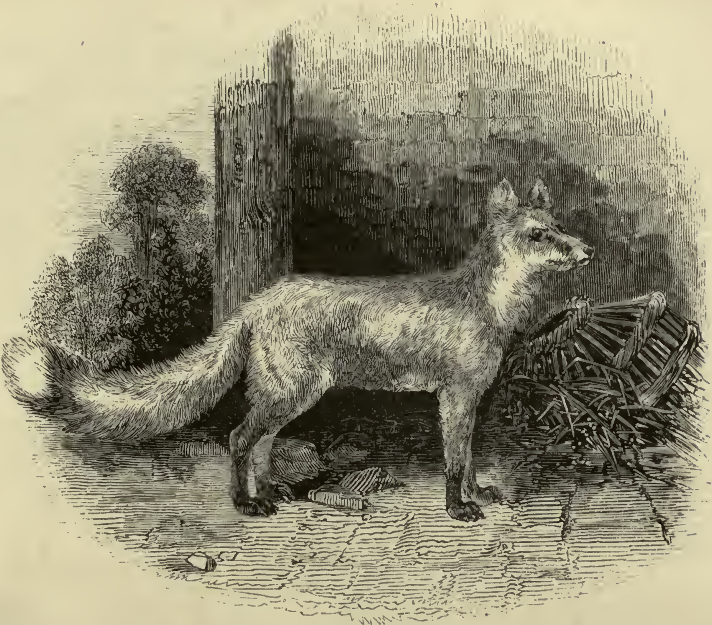
* A breed between the largest size of greyhound and foxhound. Some of them are swift, very savage, and admirably adapted for the purpose.

After choosing our passes between the pinewood and copse, we sent a first-rate old hound to draw the latter; scarcely had it been in the cover ten minutes, when it opened upon a cold scent, and continued puzzling for a considerable time. As this was not its wont when upon a roe, we half suspected a fox: presently the scent warmed, and in a short time the hound opened gaily. Our hopes were high, as it came straight in the direction of our passes. In a moment I heard my brother fire: and the baying of the hound ceasing shortly after, I concluded the shot had taken effect, and walked off to see what he had killed. When I had gone a little distance, I met him running and calling to me to get into my pass again, as he had shot at an enormous fox in the thickest part of the cover; and as it had doubled back, which had occasioned the check, it would most likely try my pass next. I wheeled about at full speed, and arrived just too late for a deadly shot. When within seventy yards of the pass, the fox was bounding over the stone wall that divides the copse from the pine-wood, and presenting his broadside, a very distant but clear and open shot. I discharged both barrels, and watched narrowly to see if he was hit; the ground was level for a short way, and no abatement of his speed was perceptible; but as soon as he began to climb the hill, a labouring motion at once told that one of us had wounded him. Without stopping to load, I ran to see if there was blood upon the grass, and when thus engaged, the hound, which had recovered the track, came up full cry. I had no choice left but to breast the hill, and, if possible, keep within sound of the dog. Panting and breathless, I could hear the bay more and more distant, and was just beginning to fear that the fox's object was the savage ravines of Glen-Douglas, when it ceased on a sudden. Encouraged by the hope that he might be run down, I redoubled my exertions, and after scrambling a mile and a half from where I fired, saw the hound at check, at the top of the pine-wood where it joins the heather. I made several unsuccessful casts above; and then, thinking that, unable to climb the hill, he had returned to the shelter of the wood, I was making a circle below, when he sprang out of the heather, not thirty yards off, and ran straight down the hill, his lagging and staggering gait showing that he had got his death-wound. I would now have given a good deal had my gun been loaded; but not a moment was to be lost, as the hound viewed the fox, and was again full cry. I dashed over stock and stone, but it was not long before there was another pause in mid career. When I came up, the ground was perfectly bare, not a furze-bush to cover a rat, and the hound completely at fault. I had just taken out my powder-flask to load, when, from no other concealment than the bare stem of a fallen fir-tree, the fox a second time burst out, as fair a shot as I could wish. The hound was close to his brush, so back went my powder-flask into my pocket, and I rushed down the steep with reckless desperation. The bay became fainter and fainter; my head grew dizzy; I had run a distance of three miles on one of the steepest hills in Scotland, and had just given up hope of another check,



MOUNTAIN FOX.



CUR FOX.

when I heard a woodman's axe. More by signs than by words, I made him comprehend that he must follow the dog as long as he was able; sat down to rest for a moment, and then loaded my gun. No sound was now to be heard; the whole wood seemed as if it had never been disturbed. I shouldered my gun, and was proceeding, as I thought, in the direction of the chase, when I met my brother, who had from the first taken a different route, in order to intercept the fox at another point. We proceeded together in search of hound and woodman, but for a long time unsuccessfully. At last we thought of returning to the place where I first found him at work. Our delight may be imagined, when we saw the hound tied up, the woodman smoking his pipe, and the fox lifeless on the ground, a perfect monster. The man's account was, that after following a considerable way, and being nearly distanced, there was a sudden check; when he came up, he found the fox dead, the hound standing over him, without having touched a hair—he had run till his heart was broken. We sent this magnificent fox to be stuffed at the College Museum, Glasgow. Those who had charge of it told us they had never seen one nearly so large, and many who came on purpose to see it were equally astonished at its size. It is now in my possession; and the woodcut shows most correctly the difference between it and a very fine specimen of the poultry-fox, shot in my brother's preserves. The brush of the larger fox is not longer than that of the smaller, and less white on the tip, but it is uncommonly thick and bushy. He stands very high upon his legs, which are exceedingly muscular; his head is very broad, and his nose not nearly so peaked as the other's; his coat is also much more shaggy, and mixed with white hairs—an invariable mark of the hill-fox, and which makes his colour lighter and a less decided red than the fox of the Lowlands.

THE WILD-CAT

THE wild-cat is now rare in this country. Although I have spent a great part of my life in the most mountainous districts of Scotland, where killing vermin formed the gamekeeper's principal business, and often my own recreation, I have never seen more than five or six genuine wild-cats. Many, on reading this, will perhaps wonder at my statement, and even give it a flat contradiction, by alleging the numbers that have come under their own notice. Nay, I was even gravely told by a gentleman from the south of England, a keen observer and fond of natural history, that there were wild-cats there,* and the skin of a cat killed in one of the southern counties was sent to me as a proof; this, I need hardly say, was the large and sleek coat of an overgrown Tom, whose ancestors, no doubt, had purred upon the hearth-rug.

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* I have been frequently assured that wild-cats have been killed on the Cumberland and Westmoreland hills; but, never having seen any specimens, I cannot speak from my own knowledge. There is no doubt that martens exist in some of the most hilly and wooded districts of England.

I am far from meaning that there are no cats running wild in England; of course, wherever there are tame cats, some of them, especially the very old ones, will forsake their homes, and live by plunder in the woods. These may also breed; but their progeny, though undomesticated, will always be widely different in habits, in appearance, in strength, and in ferocity, from the true cat of the mountains. I have seen no less than thirty of these *naturalised wild-cats* trapped in a year in a single preserve in the Highlands;* some of *them* might have been mistaken for the genuine breed. The colour in both was pretty much alike, but there were other points which clearly showed their domestic origin. They were, in fact, a cross between the wild and tame cat. I have seen many of this kind stuffed in museums and collections, as fine specimens of the wild-cat, and believed to be so even by those who might have known better.

The unerring marks of the thorough-bred species are, first the great size,—next, the colour, which does not vary

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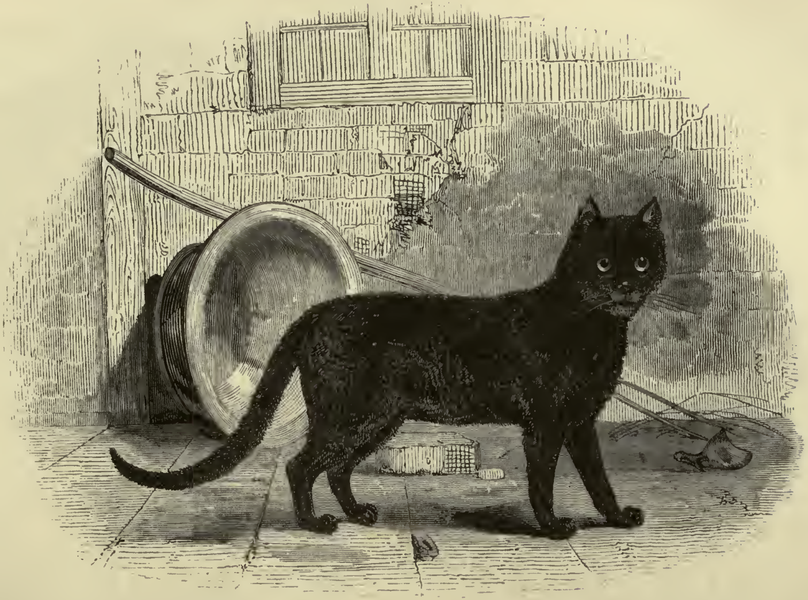
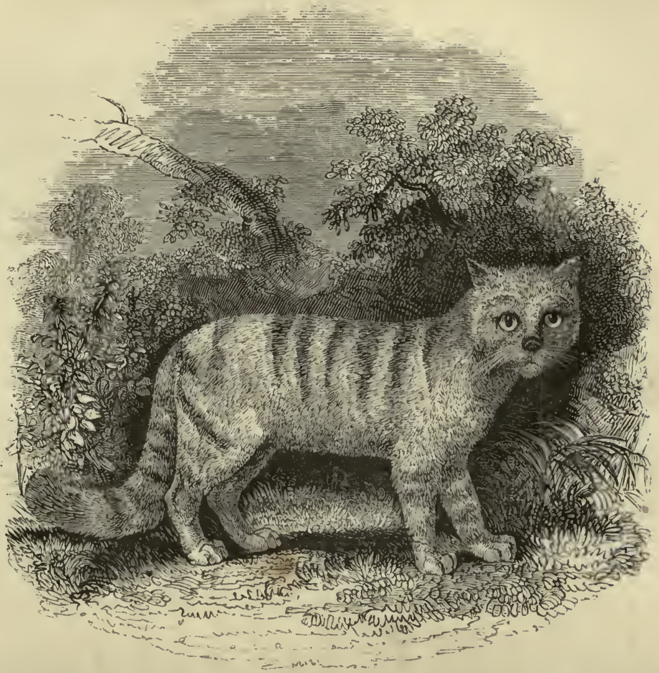
* The mischief done to game even by the house-cat, especially if half-starved in the cottages of the poor, may be shown from the admission of a witness whose evidence will not be doubted. A friend of mine had shot a large cat in a covert adjoining the cottage of an old woman, and, being rather pleased at ridding the preserve of such an enemy, was carrying it too ostentatiously past her door. She *banged* out in a fury, demanding "how he *daur'd* to kill the best cat in a' the country?" He replied that "wandering cats were never of much use for mice." "*Mice!* Wha's speakin o' mice, or rats aither? There was scarcely a day she didna bring in a young hare or a rabbit or a patrick. *Use!* It wad be somethin' to be prood o', if thae ill-faured brutes o' dogs o' yours were half as usefu'!!"





It should be observed that the Wild-cat is crouching a little, which takes off from its height, while full effect is given to that of the Tame.

as in the domestic animal, but is always a dusky grey, brindled on the belly and flanks with dingy brown—hair long and rough,—the head exceedingly broad,—ears short,—tusks extremely large. Another very distinguishing point is the great length and power of the limbs. It stands as high as a good-sized dog. But perhaps the most unfailing mark of all is the tail, which is so long and bushy as to strike the most careless observer. In the males it is generally much shorter than in the females, but even more remarkable, being almost as thick as a fox's brush.

The woodcut is taken from the largest female that has ever been killed in Dumbartonshire, and most correctly shows the difference of its size from that of a full-grown house-cat. It was trapped on the banks of Loch Lomond in the depth of winter, having come down to the low ground in quest of prey. The bait was half a hare, hung on a tree, the trap being set immediately under. The person who went to inspect it thought, when at a little distance, that a yearling lamb was caught. As he came near, the cat sprang up two or three feet from the ground, carrying the large heavy trap as if scarcely feeling its weight. He would have had great difficulty in killing it, had he not dodged round the tree when aiming a blow. I have seen two males bearing the same proportion to this specimen, both in size and fierceness of aspect, as an old half-wild Tom to a chimney-nook mother Tabby. One of these was shot by a gamekeeper, when on a grouse-shooting expedition, in a very remote range; the other was trapped near the top of a high mountain.

Except in the depth of a very severe winter, the wild-cat seldom leaves its lone retreat. Nothing comes amiss to it in the shape of prey; lambs, grouse, hares, are all seized with equal avidity. The female fears nothing when in defence of her young, and will attack even man himself. She generally rears them in rocky clefts and precipices. I saw a couple of young ones that were killed in one of the mountain cairns; they were nearly as large as a house-cat, although not many weeks old. It was curious to see their short tails, and helpless, unformed kitten look, contrasted with their size. Several attempts were made to shoot the old one, but she was never seen; probably, upon missing her young, she forsook the rocks.

The wild-cat has seldom more than three or four young ones at a time—often only two.

A sad and rather romantic story in connection with the wild-cat occurred about seven years ago, in the neighbourhood of my residence at that time. The farmer of Ben Ledi had detected some young wild-cats among the massy precipices near the top of that sublime mountain. One morning, after desiring his family to tell his brother (who was expected from Edinburgh on a visit) that he would be back in the afternoon, he left his home and wound his way up to the rocks of the wild-cats' den. Not appearing at nightfall, they became much alarmed, and arranged a party to search the mountain at break of day. As he had said something about destroying the wild-cats, they determined first to seek him there. Within a short distance of the precipice they at once saw him seated on a rock quite dead! His shepherd's staff, with his gully-knife tied on the end of it, was lying by his side, and a full pinch of snuff between his fingers. They traced a stream of blood to the wild-cats' rock, and upon looking at the knife it was dyed red also. The whole was soon apparent. The farmer, in endeavouring to stab the cats with his spear-knife, had stumbled upon it, and divided the femoral artery. His first natural impulse was to run home; but immediately getting faint, he had attempted to refresh himself with a pinch, when his hand fell powerless for ever. The man's face was familiar to me: I had often exchanged with him the friendly greeting when rowing up Loch Lubnaig for a few hours' fly-fishing; and I could hardly realise that he whom I had seen working at his peats a few days before, in full health and vigour, was now stiff and cold as the rocks of his mountain. The lesson was strange and startling, that he who had prepared the weapon of death, should so suddenly have perished by it himself. Full of life's hopes and cares, with an eye undimmed and his natural force unabated, he had gained the ridge of the Hill of God,* there all unwarned and unattended—to die.

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* Ben Ledi signifies in English "the hill of God;" and, I believe, takes its name from the old tradition of pilgrims crossing the mountain to sacrifice on the other side.

THE MARTEN

This beautiful connecting link between the fowmarte* and the cat is not a native of this country. It was imported, I believe, from America, and is pretty generally dispersed over the wild and wooded districts of Scotland. It has none of the offensive odour of the fowmarte, and even more alertness and activity than the cat. Running at a little distance, it looks exactly like a giant weasel. In some the breast is nearly white, whilst in others it is a bright orange, which has given occasion to the supposition that they are varieties of the species; but I have no doubt they are the same. Of the many I have seen trapped or shot, I always remarked that the male was darker in the colour, and his breast almost white; that of the female was orange, and the fur lighter brown. I had a male and female stuffed that were trapped together at the same bait, exactly answering to this description.

When pursued, the marten, although its legs are so short, can run faster than a cat; this it does by a succession of springs, for which its long body gives it a great advantage. As a last resource, it will climb trees, and spring from one to another like a squirrel. I once, with two or three companions, had a curious hunt of this kind. The marten had been driven by a very swift terrier into a clump of pines, which it so nearly resembled in colour that we had great difficulty in keeping sight of it. At last we thought of cutting off its retreat by climbing all the adjacent trees: the creature showed great coolness when thus driven to extremities, awaiting the approach of its enemy, perched on the pinnacle of the tallest pine; and it was only when one of our party got quite close, that it sprang from the top to the bottom of the tree, rebounding nearly a yard from the hard turf, just where I was standing, and, not a whit disconcerted, darted off at full speed, gained a precipice, and made good its escape.

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* A corruption from the Teutonic *ful*, fetid, and *merder*, a marten.

Unless hard pressed, however, the marten is more apt to go to earth, or take refuge in the clefts of the rocks, than upon trees. When run to ground by a fox-hound, there is no creature more easily smoked out—it will bolt almost immediately; and numbers are killed in this manner, although, from the quickness and uncertainty of its exit, it is anything but an easy shot.

When in quest of prey, it is daring as well as mischievous; not so apt to leave its secure fastness in the day-time, but under cover of darkness it will travel many miles, committing great devastation in preserves; and unless trapped or shot, will return night after night to the poultry-yard, killing many more fowls than it devours. One of these pilferers had nearly made a clear sweep of my father's poultry: it kept peering over the perch with the greatest impudence, and could scarcely be driven thence by the dairymaid: no sooner was she out of sight than it would return. The farm-overseer at last procured a trap, and having set it without art or covering, the loud screams of the robber presently made known his capture.

The marten generally selects a magpie's nest in the thickest pine-tree, and there rears its young; hence it has obtained the name of pine-weasel. One, however, in the Black Mount, had the impudence to select royal quarters for its progeny, and to take possession of the eagle's castle. The forester having reason to think that the bird was sitting hard, peeped over the cliff into the eyrie. To his amazement, a marten was suckling her kittens in comfortable occupancy. As he had a fair look down, he watched them for some time, intending to return in a few days with his gun. When he did so, the martens, old and young, had left the nest, and no trace of them was to be found. Another was brought me that had its litter in the thatch of an old barn; it was detected by a dog, driven out, and shot. The young were rather smaller than kittens, and quite as sweet and clean.

If seized by the breast, the marten, like the cat, is easily killed by a good dog; but the skull is so hard that I have seen one, when released from a trap with all its legs broken, roll away upon the ground, after receiving half-a-dozen hard blows on the head from the keeper's cudgel. This animal, being easily trapped or run down, is not nearly so numerous now as it was some years ago.

THE OTTER

THIS eccentric creature is so much hidden from notice, partly owing to its resources for concealment lying both in land and water, that its habits are not much observed, although it is so generally distributed throughout the three kingdoms. It excites greater attention on the rocky coasts from being occasionally hunted there. In the west Highlands, especially, many of the resident proprietors pique themselves on the excellence of their otter-terriers. Some few keep hounds for the purpose, but the terrier is a very good substitute in these wild districts, and of course far more easily procured.

A good otter-hunt is a very curious sight, and from being able for the most part to see the dogs, and keep up with them, the interest seldom flags. In the Lowlands and Border counties of England, where otters are not so numerous, the fowmarte is often hunted instead with otter-hounds. I was told by a subscriber to a Cumberland otter-pack, that they had once run a polecat twelve miles from the place where they found his cold drag, and that a six or seven miles' chase is nothing uncommon. It must have taken the fowmarte nearly the whole night to have travelled this distance, and he is generally snug in his retreat many hours before the hounds are even laid on his track. A true otter-hound will, however, catch the scent immediately, if his game has been on the ground or in the river the previous night. The real breed, supposed to be a cross between the old English hound and a rough terrier, is very rare. They have shaggy coats of coarse wiry hair, but smooth heads and ears; in fact, a hound's head with a rough coat fit for the water. Most that we see now are either altogether rough or smooth. There is no dog more takes my fancy than one of these ancient thorough-bred otter-hounds. His weird look of hoar antiquity always associates him with "grisly eld;" and his characteristic method of working his amphibious quarry adds to the interest his appearance creates.

Terriers are best in rocky cavernous places, and seldom fail to make the otter bolt if they can get near him. From the abundance of prey, these sea-haunting otters grow to a great size; inland ones frequenting heavy dead water, where fish abound, are often large also. A remarkably fine specimen of a fresh-water otter was trapped a few winters ago on the Thames, above Henley, by a keeper who sold him to me for a trifle. About as large a dog-otter, though not in such sleek order, was run down by the Duke of Atholl's otter-hounds last summer. The difference of condition in these otters, no doubt, arose from the sluggish Thames being better suited to their nature than the rapid Tay. But both these river-poachers were completely thrown into the shade by a pirate from the rocks of Skye. This splendid creature was shot last spring by an English gamekeeper on the coast of that island. At first sight, I fancied it one of the monsters from the American lakes.

Otters are always pretty plentiful on Loch Lomond, and some heathery rocks full of treacherous hollows, close to the water, on Inch Connachan, are called "the otter rocks," from the otters rearing their young among them every year. One of the island game-watchers, a few summers ago, saw an old female, followed by two young cubs, swim from these rocks to Inch Fad, a distance of two miles. The day was very calm, and the dam swam slowly to accommodate her young. In an old channel of the Finlass Burn, a pair were often to be seen in summer disporting in the pool, nearly tepid from the heat of the sun. They seemed to be enjoying a warm bath.

The otters seldom frequented Rossdhu Bay till the autumn floods, when their sputtering blow was heard in the moonshine. Thomas A'thing, from marks of his own discovery, always knew when they were there, and the odds were that he secured them and sold their jackets before the week was out. I recollect a very large one that carried his trap into the deep—for Thomas, like a knowing otter-trapper, never fastened it. A heavy rain all that night, and next day, raised the loch, and prevented him from looking for it. When the weather cleared he found his trap gone, and no float in the water to mark where it was. Phlegmatic Thomas immediately knew that the string was too short, from the loch being so high, so he "consulted his raison," settled where the trap *should* be, kept his secret till the loch grew less, then returned and found the float within ten yards of the spot he had calculated, and the otter fast in the trap at the bottom—of course drowned.

One day in July, when going to fish, I perceived an otter perfectly still on the top of the water in Loch Vennacher. It was a good way from the shore, and just opposite some steep rocks, where the black deep water was much frequented by salmon. It seemed on the watch like a cat, and it occurred to me that possibly it might be looking out for the rise of a fish, after the manner of seals. The renter of a stake-net fishery told me, that once, when watching the gambols of a large salmon, a seal put up its head at the distance of a mile, swam up in an incredibly short time, and caught the salmon. The seal has this advantage over the otter, that it can seize fish with its paws, and also break nets with them.

Great numbers of otters resort to the lochs of Lubnaig and Vennacher, and come down in hard weather to the streams that flow out of them. I used to be much annoyed in the winter mornings, when ranging Lennie and Garwhinnie waters for ducks, by people getting down before me to secure the salmon which the otter had "ta'en oot." Of course they put up all the wild-fowl. After a powdering of snow, the mark of a hobnailed shoe was sure to turn my course from these rivers to Loch Vennacher, as I knew full well that the enormous foot would plod down Lennie water, and up Garwhinnie to the very loch, without leaving a nook undisturbed, if it only had a quarter of an hour's start of me. I had therefore to be at the river by break of day, and was rewarded by many a famous chance at the fowl, as well as frequent insight into the operations of the otter.

Many a fine fish have I seen lying on the shingle with only a few bites out of its neck; and, if undiscovered by the otter's scavengers, it was seldom honoured by a second visit from its captor. In snow, I generally saw where the otter had landed to dry himself, but he never strayed far from the river's bank; and indeed it would have been difficult walking, as he always left the mark of his belly ploughing the snow, if there was only two inches on the ground.

In my early shooting days, when after wild-fowl, my water-dog brought me a half-grown otter which he had seized in a drain. I could not, at first, make out what extraordinary mouthful he had picked up. When I saw it was a young otter, I brought it home alive in my game-bag, intending to tame it. But the dog had broken its back, so we were obliged to have it killed. A few years after, I shot a fine male one near the same place. My terriers came on its track in a brook. It immediately took the land a long way ahead of the dogs, and by a short cut made for the loch. I got my eye upon it slowly cantering along, intercepted and rolled it over not thirty yards from the shore.

A friend of mine one autumn was wandering along the banks of the Tweed, and seeing the dead water of a deep pool a little agitated, he peeped cautiously over. An old otter and several young ones were paddling about in perfect security and comfort. He made a slight noise, and all disappeared as if by magic—where and how he could not discover. After remaining quiet for a short time, they were upon the surface again in the same sleight of foot way. He described it as a beautiful and interesting sight, and slipped back without a second time disturbing them. He told me he had heard that Lord John Scott's otter-hounds came to the pool shortly after, on purpose to hunt them, but never discovered either the dam or her young.

The ears of the otter, buried in its fur, like those of most water animals, give it something of a reptile appearance. But short ears are not always the characteristic of creatures that feed in and about water. There is an aquatic mouse, about the size and colour of a half-grown Norway rat, which has very large round transparent ears. I have often met with it when fishing the more sluggish waters of the Lowlands. It is fully as expert a diver as the common water-rat. When angling a shallow gravelly channel of the Ale in Selkirkshire, I saw one dive a distance of at least a dozen yards, and watched it swimming very swiftly under water all the time. From its light fawn colour, it is far more easily seen than the water-rat. Its legs are also longer, and its motions more light and springy. I have never observed it in any part of the Highlands.

The common *Mus aquaticus* is an ugly creature, and his disgusting look is increased by the apparent deficiency of ears. I remember three being taken alive, by a water-dog, on the Thames, of a rich cream colour. They all kept to the same bend of the river, and were constantly noticed gamboling among the reeds before they were captured. I never saw more savage little creatures; they seemed to surpass even an imprisoned weasel in ferocity.

I have often noticed that loathsome creatures prey upon loathsome food; a favourite morsel of the water-rat is a bloated toad,* while a nest of earwigs are the choice tit-bits of the latter. As many as forty have been taken out of a toad's maw. Sheridan's remark to a poor starved man eating shrimps is equally appropriate here—"You're very like your meat."

The otter, like all animals that depend on the waters for prey, loses much of his address and cunning when cut off from his native element. Bewildered on land, he seems to feel that he has no fair play, and sometimes refuses to take advantage even of the resources within his reach. In the river or loch, on the contrary, he has always his wits about him, and will try every ruse ere he yields up his life.

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* I have frequently offered my brown owls a toad, but they always refused it. They, however, greedily devoured frogs; and once, when the old male had just swallowed one, we cheated him with a toad. As soon as he detected the nauseous mouthful, he threw it from him with every symptom of disgust, although, in his hunger, he had half bolted it. Even the voracious pike rejects a toad as bait.

When hunted, and want of air forces him to the surface, he either takes advantage of a water leaf to cover the tip of his nose, all the rest of him being immersed, or comes up under some rotten stump precisely his own muddy colour. Flapper shooters may notice the same instinct, when they surprise a brood of ducklings, though in a far less degree. At the signal of the mother they all dive, but come to the top again so stealthily—some under a screen of weeds, wrapped round them like a green veil, and others hidden by a hollow bank or root—that, although several are within a few yards, none may be detected until they are winded by the sagacious retriever.

THE HILL POACHER

An English poacher is generally to be found among the very dregs of the people — a hardened unscrupulous blackguard, who would shoot the gamekeeper with greater pleasure than he would a pheasant, who fears nothing but detection, and whose conscience would never sting him till on his death-bed. Scotch poachers are a different class of men. To be thieves, drunkards, and, if need be, murderers, is not a *necessary* part of their calling. And, although they are in general not the most reputable part of society, yet many, especially in the Highlands, stand pretty fair with their neighbours. The cause of this difference is easily traced. In England the ground is far more easily preserved, and the keepers much better trained; therefore no man need attempt the destruction of game, unless he is prepared to run all risks of a deadly skirmish with the watchers. Indeed there would be few poachers in England, were it not for the great abundance of what may be termed *tame game*. But the temptations to netting, snaring, ginning pheasants at perch, or smoking them by means of brimstone, are so great, that the poachers traffic with the game-shops to an enormous extent.

To be a good shot, or understand anything of sporting, is not of much consequence to the English poacher, his method of securing game being a good deal like robbing a hen-roost or rabbit-warren. These men generally poach in company, the numbers being regulated by the party of watchers they expect on the out-look. The gang, often half-drunk, sally forth from some low beer-shop whenever the night is clear and starry. If there are many hares or rabbits in the preserve, they take some mute curs to drive them about, after having set the snares. The fowling-piece, though always carried, in case of an encounter, is seldom used upon game; except, perhaps, with a quarter of a charge, to knock down pheasants at roost, within pistol-shot. This makes little noise, but, of course, they prefer making none. It is well known, when they do resort to this method, that, by beginning at the lowest bough, they may nearly clear the tree. But, should they stupidly shoot the top bird first, the others are very apt to fly off when it comes rustling past them. They have various other methods of quietly destroying game, some of which are practised even in broad daylight. It is seldom, however, that love of sport can be urged in their defence, as these depredations are exactly akin to gipsy thefts, and have little of the excitement caused by love of hunting, so natural to man. It is easy to see that none but desperate characters would engage in such a life. By constantly herding and drinking together, they corrupt each other more; and, by living in continual apprehension, and determining to brave the worst, they learn to set no value on human life, especially that of a gamekeeper.

Scotch poachers may be divided into Highland and Lowland. The latter class more nearly approximate to their brethren in England, especially those in the neighbourhood of large towns; viz., poach in company, have no pleasure in the sport, and care only for the profit. The deer on the islands of Loch Lomond were sometimes killed by printers from the Leven works, who, coming in boats, took their booty away with them to sell to the Glasgow poulterers. The foresters had not unfrequently to fire on the boats to keep them off. On one occasion, a party effected a landing upon the Duke of Montrose's deer island, and, having slain one animal and wounded another, were surprised by the forester and his friends. They all, except one, managed to get back to their boat, leaving the deer behind. When the unfortunate printer saw his friends row off, he managed to hide himself, and could not be discovered. The forester (a gallant Graeme) took measures to prevent his escape by immediately securing his own boat, and shotting his rifles. A perfect hurricane of wind most opportunely set in for several days, and prevented the gang, without imminent risk of life, from returning at night. During the day, the forester took his station on a point that commanded a view of the whole island, and, when a boat's crew appeared, ran down to meet them. The printers often attempted to land, but, as soon as they approached the shore, he fired ball at them, and manfully kept them at bay for three days. On the fourth morning, the half-starved wretch came to the lodge, and delivered himself up.

In remote situations, however, the Lowland poacher often engages in the pursuit of game with the same zest as a gentleman, piques himself upon the excellence of some half-bred cur of a dog, and astonishes his acquaintance by bouncing anecdotes of his wonderful gun. In such out-of-the-way places an amateur like this has often considerable opportunity for indulging his love of sport. Scotch gamekeepers (unlike gardeners) are not to be compared to those of England. A great proportion of them have been poachers themselves, and turning them into gamekeepers is not a sovereign specific against their old propensities. Many know literally nothing of their business but how to shoot in a bungling manner ; and, provided the master is not much of a sportsman himself, and sees game now and then upon his table, he makes few inquiries about the dogs, vermin, poachers, &c. The consequence is, that the single game-*killer*, not *keeper*, troubles himself as little about these *unimportant* particulars, and goes lounging about with his badge of dignity (*i. e.* his gun,) summer and winter, occasionally bringing home some game; while the sly poacher, and slyer vermin, are welcome to the overplus for anything he cares! The poacher, therefore, not only has the free run of the shooting-ground by night, but makes it his business to find out when the gamekeeper is despatched upon an errand, and takes a snug rap at the partridges or pheasants by day. At night, he sets snares for hares, and I am sorry to say that the English method of doing this in the middle of the fields has come into general use. He also shoots the pheasants at roost during moonlight, and, if the single Argus of the night should happen to be sound asleep close to the scene of carnage, he makes as much despatch as possible, covering the birds where killed with grass or leaves, and marking the place. He then runs to his cottage, the door of which has been left open, in case of pursuit, and quietly picks up his game at any good opportunity. An old hand, when showing me the casts on the Clyde, said that he had one night killed a dozen pheasants from the public road, over the Duke of ——'s park-wall, marking the wall with a piece of chalk where each bird fell, and secured every one next day by jumping the wall, and depositing them in a sack, which he called *potatoes*.

When such is the common system of game-preserving in Scotland, no wonder that the great proportion of our Lowland shooting is not very first-rate, and that the poachers do not much trouble themselves with the English methods of netting the fields, &c., which would not be profitable. They are often men who have a regular trade to trust to, and only engage in poaching as a recreation and "sma' help."

But the most sporting poacher is the Highlander.* His chief objects are grouse, black game, and deer; and, as he dare not show his face on the moors while they are crowded with sportsmen, at the beginning of the season, he generally waits till the gentlemen "hae had their wull o't." The birds are then wild and strong, and can only be killed by means of traps or the gun. Comparatively few are taken by the trap, so the poacher trusts to his skill in eluding the watchers, if there are any, and sallies forth with his dog and gun, in full enjoyment of the sport. Many of these poachers are good shots, and some even can boast a fairish dog. But, generally speaking, their dog is none of the best, often only a colley or terrier, taught to make an apology for a point. The dog's deficiencies, however, are amply made up for by his master's knowledge of the habits of the birds, of the places where they are likely to be found, as well as to pitch after their flight. Indeed, I should have no hesitation in backing one of these fellows to procure more *fair* shots, at this time, with his single mongrel, than many of our sporting gentlemen with the best couple of pointers or setters he may possess. But they seldom shoot in *good style*, except at deer; and the best of them, though thought paragons in the neighbourhood, and boasting that, "gie them a bottle o' whisky in their pocket, they will walk and shoot against ony man in the kingdom," are as inferior to good shots among

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* Before the gangs of smugglers were broken up, the Highland poacher was a much more desperate character. All these smugglers were poachers,

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and as regardless scoundrels as could be met with. Now, however, in place of little patches of barley on all the Highland crofts, good oats are substituted, and not a twinkling fire, on the darkest night, is to be seen on the islands of our lochs. We may thank the excise laws.

gentlemen, as they are superior in every other requisite for grouse-shooting. The reason of this is plain enough. The poacher refuses "crank" uncertain shots, hence he seldom excels in them; and, as the birds are always wild and difficult of access when his operations begin, all his ingenuity is exerted to get within easy distance, and, no matter whether sitting or flying, to bag *as many birds with as few shots as possible.*

Many a capital shot, who has left the moors for the low grounds, under the idea that grouse are unapproachable, would be thoroughly astonished if he put himself under the implicit guidance of one of these men. Indeed, most sportsmen, however expert with the fowling-piece, and however much they may pique themselves upon their skill in all the details of the sport, scarcely know its first principles, as they leave the moors just when the thorough bass is to be begun.

The tricks of the Highland poacher are manifold and ingenious. He can always form a shrewd guess to what distance the report of his gun may be heard at any dreaded point, and, if possible, contrives to get a hillock between, in order to intercept it. Indeed, I have known them shoot for days *before the moors opened;* and, by such management, as well as taking advantage of the wind, not a report was heard by the watchers. But, should they be discovered, they seldom offer other resistance than leg bail, which is very often taken, as the poacher's wind and knowledge of the country is, generally, at least equal to that of his pursuer.

A knowing hill-poacher may in this way destroy far more game than the gentleman who has preceded him over the same ground, although enjoying every advantage of dogs, season, and opportunity; and, unless opposed by skilful and determined watchers, may escape detection for years. But when the head-keeper is an active, honest, and clear-headed man, above all, *if he is well supported by his master*, it is rarely that the poacher can pursue his trade long. The first thing the keeper does, upon taking charge of a large Highland estate, is to make himself acquainted with the names, persons, and places of abode of all the noted poachers within reach; for, although he may often be troubled with others from a distance, yet those on the spot do the chief mischief. He then selects his watchers with great care; if possible, *men from a distance*, and well known to himself. These watchers are all provided with a telescope and pistol. They are expected, in a very short time, to know the gait and manner of every poacher within their own bounds. They soon become wonderfully expert, with the help of their glass, and, even when they have never had the opportunity of seeing the poacher face to face, will distinguish him with certainty by his mode of walking. Should any of the watchers turn out lazy, faint-hearted, or stupid, his place is immediately supplied by another.

As soon as the head-keeper has drilled his recruits into a perfect knowledge of their duty, he commences operations in good earnest. He always has a spy to watch the house of the poacher he means to entrap, and thus knows all his movements.* Should he detect him on the ground, he takes care to have one of the best-winded assistants to intercept at this point, before giving chase. This is even more necessary when looking after a night-poacher. The watchers are as knowing as the poacher in regard to wind, always keeping to leeward of their beat, and taking advantage of all the hills that give them a far look-out, where the report of a gun would be most apt to reach them.

With the advantage of a thoroughly trained head-keeper, and the expense only of the day's wages of a few watchers, most Highland properties might be comparatively safe from poachers, who would very soon cease to molest them. These men, if resolutely seized, will seldom make determined resistance; for although many of them, from motives of policy, think it necessary to talk big, in order to deter farmers and shepherds from coming near them, yet I have known many of those gallant talkers the first to show the white feather. One great black hulk, of six feet two, who infested my father's moors before they were strictly preserved, endeavoured, very unsuccessfully, to spread the terror of his name, for he was several times found out to be the most arrant craven. But, indeed, the race of Highland poachers, be their pluck ever so good, have no wish to engage in more serious offences, and, as long as the generality of our moors are in the neglected state they are at present, have ample opportunity of making a profitable thing of it without much risk. Whenever a gentleman sets about protecting in good earnest, they for the most part leave his estate for that of his more careless neighbour.

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* A common but somewhat stale trick of the Highland poachers, is to conceal the barrel of their gun down the leg of their trowsers, carrying the stock either in the inside coat-pocket, or wrapping it in a plaid. The watchers at once detect a man thus hampered, and always look upon him with suspicion if he has his plaid round him. Many of them, therefore, leave their gun at the nearest bothy to the ground. This avails them little, as the watchers know well enough that when the poacher leaves his house at a suspicious time, or bends his steps in a suspicious direction, the instrument of death will turn up, as if by magic.

To hunt a steady dog with a lantern tied round its neck is a most deadly way of night-netting, and the more so, as dark and rough weather are no obstacles to success. When the light *points*, two men come round with the net in front, and draw it over the dog, frequently securing a whole covey of partridges huddled together within a few inches of his nose. Fortunately, however, this wholesale destruction can only take place where the keepers are most supine. When they are alert, it would be next to impossible for poachers to hunt many fields and not be betrayed by this *ignis fatuus;* and when once the dodging lantern *is* seen, no marauders could be more easily captured. Neither hares nor pheasants are in any danger from this mode of netting, as the former always move about at night, and the latter roost in trees.

As to snaring, which is oftener practised either at night or during divine service, every trained keeper, by looking the runs both in the fields and fences, will easily know whether snares have been fixed in them. He then comes quietly at the time when he thinks they will be set, puts a rabbit or hare into one of them, and places a watch. Many people fancy this method of taking game the most difficult of detection; but, with efficient keepers, the snarer is, perhaps, the most easily secured of all poachers.

A curious snaring story was told me by a gamekeeper in Morayshire. He and his son perceived evident marks of snares for rabbits on the open sand-downs, but all their ingenuity could not detect the culprit. He watched at night, and all proper times, but there was no appearance of any one coming near the place. At last, one of them saw a woman apparently doing some farm-work in broad day. His suspicions were not much roused until he took out his telescope, and, not being able to find out what she was at, determined to ascertain. After a little manœuvring, they surprised her in the very fact. She had several snares set, which she always took care to do in the middle of the day, taking them up in the evening. No one ever suspected her, and the keeper declared they were the neatest snares he had ever seen. Some years ago I caught two equally absurd poachers. Returning home from shooting one evening, my dog was caught in a snare. I immediately fixed one of the rabbits I had shot in the dog's predicament, and set a watch. No one came near the snare until next day, when two little fellows, about ten years old, made their appearance, and, as soon as they had pounced on the rabbit, were pounded themselves.

Every Highland district is infested by its own set of poachers, more or less, according to circumstances. There is a family likeness in most of these biped vermin, which is easily accounted for by the manner in which they spend their life. For the most part they have an active walk, a quick eye, and long sight—all very necessary accomplishments for a hill poacher, and much improved by constant use. Their expression is generally shy and repulsive, and strangely belies their free step and almost graceful bearing. Of the many dozens I have seen and conversed with, few have been distinguished by any other characteristics. Two exceptions to this general rule occur to me, and both, though very different from each other, were no ordinary men.

When I first knew Gregor More of Callander, his poaching days were over, for he had a mortal disease upon him, from having lain out in the fields one cold night when intoxicated. He still managed to saunter down the river, and to give those beautiful sweeps with his line and salmon fly which were the admiration of the whole clachan. He engaged to show me the casts the first time I fished the Teith; and, from the character I had heard of him, I was not prepared to be prepossessed by his appearance. Drunkard, poacher, outlaw, (for he had been outlawed for non-appearance after thrashing several fellows in some broil,) I expected a mixture of cunning and ferocity, and had my doubts whether he would play me fair in pointing out the river. At a little distance, a tall, respectably dressed man, with his plaid slung over his shoulder, and a little terrier dog at his foot, seemed shaping his course towards me. When he approached, he looked me full in the face, took off his oil-skin cap, and made a respectful bow. I had appointed Gregor to meet me a little farther down, and now thought, can this possibly be the man?

He at once put me out of doubt by remarking upon a few flies round my hat, that they were too light for " oor water," but one or two might do. I looked at him with some curiosity: a nobler specimen of manhood I had never beheld. Upwards of six feet high, of the finest herculean proportions, and straight as an arrow, he seemed equally formed for activity and strength. There was nothing mean or sneaking about his manner. His face was open and manly; and, despite the sad discipline to which he had exposed both mind and body, he had not effaced the natural and sure marks of force and truth from his countenance. Although wan and emaciated, there was a coolness, a will to dare, in his eye, backed by his tremendous shoulders and still powerful frame, that I could not look at him without thinking on the words, " majestic though in ruins."

I had now no more qualms about Gregor's sincerity—and well and faithfully did he repay my confidence—so well, that he gained the ill-will of many of the Callander fishers. One ungainly little bullet of a fellow especially, who gloried in a pair of fat stumps which he called " tight legs," and the bust of a man double his length, was particularly indignant that Gregor should have shown all the good casts, " which a man micht hae ta'en lang eneuch to fin' oot for himsel'." Gregor told him at once that he would also guide me along the opposite side, whenever it was my " pleeshur to go."

But Gregor was equally knowing in the passes of the red deer as the haunts of the salmon. It was alleged against him by the foresters that he "kent" every favoured track as well as themselves. He was also a first-rate marksman with a ball, and generally carried off the prize at the St Fillan's games. When talking to him, it was impossible not to be struck with the point of what he said; and his superiority in these sports, over his fellows, no doubt lay in bringing to bear upon them the full weight of his original mind.

It was a constant remark in summer, that, whenever you "kent whuskey on Gregor," you might be sure he had taken a salmon. To eat his fish was, to say the least, improvident, as bringing no supply when the fishing was over and he unable to work.—But to drink them! Alas for poor Gregor in the winter! Want, of course, came then, and I was apprised of his destitute circumstances. I sent a man on whom I could rely to procure him food; but upon no account to give him the money to spend for himself. About new-year, however, when whisky is free, Gregor and another man quarrelled about some flies, which the former had agreed to dress. Every one said that the man behaved shamefully, considering that Gregor's hands were in a manner tied. He set up "an awfu' tongue," till at last Gregor's blood boiled, and he chased him out of the house into the village. The constables apprehended Gregor; he was tried, and sentenced to be transported. But, poor fellow, his shattered frame pined in the confinement of a gaol. He soon broke completely down when deprived of the fresh air on the banks of his own Teith; and, before the time for his embarkation arrived, he was summoned to take a longer voyage, and to a country from which he should never return.*

Very unlike Gregor More was —— ——. Strange to say, he had once been a "placed minister of the Kirk," (answering to a beneficed clergyman,) and, although he often returned late on the Saturday night, after being all the week poaching the deer, his sermons were both clever and popular. I met him once when traversing a wild range of hills, and was impressed both with his general information and the courtesy of his address. He had much to say, and said it well; yet, notwithstanding the blandness of his manners, you could not help feeling that interest or passion were the mainsprings of all his actions; and that as for principle he would inwardly sneer at the very name. He was an athletic, handsome man; but his expression, though bold and confident, was selfish and wily. The following anecdotes, illustrative of his character, are capital specimens of the man.

He had shot a deer in a very out-of-the-way recess among the hills. While comfortably seated upon his quarry, enjoying a pinch of snuff in all the luxury of success, an intrusive face, followed by a gun, poked over the adjoining dike.* "Leave that deer, or I'll blow your harns aboot your lugs." —— had neglected to reload his rifle; so, without a moment's hesitation, he shouldered it, and paced slowly up the glen. As soon as he got a knoll between him and the unceremonious stranger, he loaded as quickly as possible—took a long circuit, and came down behind the identical treacherous dike. Quickly showing the same startling apparition of a face and rifle, he commanded his rival instantly to take himself off, *but to leave his gun.* The man was in the act of "gralloching"* the deer, and at once saw there was nothing for it but to obey. —— kept his gun for some time, and often said, had he asked for a bit of the deer as a favour, he would have been welcome to a side of the venison, as the other was all he needed; and, indeed, the stranger's assistance in conveying it was of far more consequence at that time than half of the deer.

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* To my shame and sorrow I record it—I did not see poor Gregor in his prison. It was eleven miles distant, and, though I always meant to visit him, I never did. The remembrance has often grieved me. May this be a lesson to all who read it, "Never to put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day."

† Stone wall without lime.

The next adventure of this worthy licentiate is a melancholy one. He and a friend, equally partial to a bit of fat venison, had agreed upon a night expedition, for the purpose of stealing a deer. They were rather at a loss for a driver; so, partly by threats and partly by persuasion, they almost forced a young shepherd to accompany them. Their guns were loaded with "swan post," to make sure work; and they were each placed under the ridge of the hill, to command the sky line, and thus have the deer between them and the light. The shepherd appeared on the ridge, and, extending both his arms above his head, as a signal that the deer were coming below, was mistaken by —— for a stag's head and horns, and shot dead upon the spot. Quickly perceiving his mistake, he rushed up, and, carrying the dead man upon his shoulders, he pitched him over the adjoining precipice, and made his companion take an oath that he would never divulge the secret. The Highlanders are a quick-witted people, however, and it was whispered that there was a little round hole in the shepherd's bonnet, which corresponded with another in his forehead, that was never made by a dash against the rocks. Some time after, the quondam minister's friend let out, in his cups, the above particulars. But few care to deny that the "puir lad's" death was occasioned by a false step over the ravine, and the night wind still howls round his lonely cairn at the foot of the rocks.

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* Cleaning.

THOMAS A' THING

Among the Scottish peasantry, one very often meets with what is called "a character." Traits of individuality, whether personal or national, are more apt to be rubbed off among the trading ranks, their outward deportment and speech being so much borrowed from each other.

The Scotch peasant, feeling himself perfectly independent of every one, except his laird, is not very lavish of his courtesy towards strangers. Indeed, his manner is often far more surly than he intends; but whatever civility he does yield is pretty sure to come from the heart. Any one accustomed to speak much with these people must be very unlucky if he does not often meet with something original; and the following is barely an average specimen of what may be expected.

Thomas a' Thing (all things) was a native of Perthshire, and when very young came to settle upon my father's estate. He had a code of honesty which, I have heard it pretty broadly asserted, was a convenient one for himself, as he allowed no law or licence except to

No. 1, while his uncompromising conduct to Nos. 2, 3, and 4, gained him many enemies, as well as my father's protection. But, after a few threats from his neighbours of "pittin' the bodie i' the loch," he was left to take his own course. Thomas's face is no bad index of his temper — a long drooping nose and peaked chin, small fixed eyes, and thick heavy eyelids. In stature he is much below the middle height, and his very walk, *like Venus's*, makes known the man. It is neither fast nor slow, and seems to say, "I'll no neglec' my business, but for a' that there's nae thrift in a hurry."

The avocations of Thomas a' Thing, as his title imports, are manifold. He can turn his hand to most things, without being very skilful in any. Mason, plumber, painter, glazier, rat and mole catcher, vermin-killer, with many other etceteras, are all alike to Thomas; but, from his love of natural history, the latter pursuits are more congenial to his taste. A chat with Thomas on these subjects was a sure specific against the spleen, and, if his conclusions were often wrong, he sometimes related from his own observation facts both curious and interesting. In winter he was always employed as one of the game-watchers, and, although he used openly to admit he was "nae great soger," yet he often showed more pluck than those who pretended they were.

Thomas returned one morning from the islands with a prisoner in the stern of his boat, and his quaint grave relation of the particulars, in presence of his captive, was truly comical. He had with his enormous telescope discovered four Leven printers poaching flappers. They had lighted a fire, and begun to cook some of their spoil. He rowed to the other side of the island, and then, winding round, got between them and their boat. He then cocked his pistol, and, like another Robinson Crusoe, dashed, single-handed, into the midst of the four. They all sprang to their legs and ran different ways; but Thomas, choosing out the man who took the least direct line to their boat, endeavoured to cut him off from his companions. The fellow, however, had good wind, and by sundry doubles managed to reach the shore where the boat *was.* But his faithful allies, thinking it prudent to throw a sop to this terrible Cerberus, had left their companion and pulled away. The printer's heart now completely failed, so, wading into the water, as the stag at bay, he awaited his pursuer's approach. Thomas, with his pistol still on full cock, and *carefully selecting* the nearest point on the shore, took deadly aim, and commanded him instantly to surrender. The fellow, now fancying that death was staring him in the face, fell down on his knees *in the water*, and begged for mercy. This was granted him, on condition of immediately shipping himself on board Thomas's craft. He then uncocked and replaced his formidable weapon, which, he afterwards told me, *had never been loaded!*

But it is only in calm clear weather that trespassers have anything to fear from Thomas's prowess. He has a perfect horror of winds and waves, and would not trust his "frail bark" upon the loch in a storm for any guerdon that could be offered him. We had been after wild swans one day, when unfortunately the wind rose a little. He became so paralysed with terror as to be useless at the oar, so we placed him at the helm. His great object then was to steer in for the shore, so that we were in continual danger of being stranded on some sunken rock. We ordered him peremptorily to put out a little, when he answered in a perfect agony, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, I'll gang up as high as ever ye like, but oh! keep me frae the water." In justice to Thomas, I must say, that I have seen him in a situation on the roof of a house, which I would not have exchanged with him for a good deal.

Thomas has a great opinion of his own powers of reasoning. He will not succumb even to the minister, certainly not to the schoolmaster; but he has always tact enough not to get beyond his depth, and, if driven to give an opinion on any point where he is not quite sure, he generally evades the difficulty by saying, "Weel, gentlemen, ye maun jist consult yer ain raison." There is at these times a grotesque assumption of dignity, as he measures out his reply; and, indeed, at all times a certain air of innate pomposity, that prevents one from addressing him otherwise than by his full designation, however tempted by wind or distance to call out "*Tom.*" As to his wardrobe, it is certainly not very smart, with the exception of an old weather-beaten tarpaulin, which is rather gaudy than becoming. He always gives it a fresh coat of paint to keep out the November rain, when he is painting a door or rail, so that it constantly changes from yellow to pea-green, and from pea-green to sky-blue. Thomas mean-while changes little himself. He is philosopher enough to be contented with his lot, thoroughly enjoying his book on a winter evening; the more so if it "trates o' nateral history." He continues to plod on his way; and even John Sly, who has the reputation of being a wag, and is a tailor to boot, whose quick grey eye looks as if winking at the sun, to take the shine out of him, has ceased to exchange a banter, having often found to his cost that there was more point and sarcasm in Thomas's wisdom than in his wit.

A SPRING WEEK IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS, 1848

THE lark, with his song of glee, and the lapwings, as they wheeled about, tumbling and chasing each other, with their vernal scream of ecstasy, had given some cheerfulness to the dull sown fields of the Lothians, when a short tour was recommended for the health of my youngest child. I had seen enough of the lovely glen which separates the Holy Loch from Loch Eck, in my shooting and fishing excursions, to make me long to penetrate farther; so, with the hearty concurrence of my fellow travellers, it was to this inlet of the West Highlands that we directed our course.

An easy steam-passage brought us to Kilmun, and next morning we skirted the Echaig,* which, like a band of silver, unites the two lochs. Every object here was familiar. M'Erle's pool, famous for a stray grilse. Ouig Hill, appropriately pronounced *wig* by the people, from its rough long heather, and Rashfield shielings, with their thatched roofs and smoky kipples, where the peat-fuel gives a pleasant notice to the traveller that for once he is getting out of the reach of carbonic influence. With most of the inmates of these poor dwellings we were also well acquainted; and among them could place on record examples both of worth and happiness.

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* I had this salmon-stream, and the shooting of Kilmun Hills, taken from Mr Campbell of Monzie, and can confidently recommend both to any man who is a true admirer of wild sport. In addition to salmon and grilse, the river abounds with sea-trout and whitlings: I have killed forty in about six hours. Thews and sinews are required to travel the moor. It is a sort of peninsula, jutting out between Loch Long and the Holy Loch, on which account scarcely a bird escapes the boundary. The grouse

At a little distance, but only far enough to keep up his credit as a lone man, is the cell of the Hermit of the Glen. A less interesting specimen of this genus of mortals can scarcely be imagined. He seems to have courted solitude only for its notoriety; and, instead of the anchorite's "crystal well," drinks freely and constantly of "*mountain dew.*"

This jovial recluse lays claim to the attention of all strangers; and, after repeated invitations, I once had the curiosity with some friends to visit the "wee place," as he calls his hut. His methods of making us understand that guests were expected to leave some donation behind them, as a trifling memento of the pleasure their company had given, were certainly ingenious enough; and after gaining his

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are pretty regularly distributed, and, with really good dogs, no man need return dissatisfied. At the beginning of the season, when the tops of the hills are the best range, the eye rests upon views singularly bold and varied. For the first few weeks I generally averaged from twelve to eighteen brace a day, besides hares and snipe. The wood-cock shooting is the best in Cowal-side.

point, he in his turn volunteered to treat us with "The Braes of Balquhidder." And really it was worth a trifle, for he managed what I had supposed an impossibility—viz., to deprive the beautiful air and words of every vestige of harmony. But his grand recipe for drawing the purse-strings is practised upon his female visitors, and consists in enumerating the moneyed dames who were dying to share his eight feet by six cabin, but they "never gaed near his heart," placing his hand most pathetically on the spot where that organ should have been! This stale trick, I am credibly informed, has maintained in full radiance his salamander of a nose for the last thirty years.

Like many anticipated pleasures, the unknown half of our day's journey did not come up to expectation. The rugged grandeur at the lower end of the glen soon blended into low hills and copses; but the drive along Loch Fine is certainly very beautiful. We slept at Inverary, and next day, after admiring the waterfall in Glenara, and walking up all the steep braes for the sake of the views, arrived at Dalmally.

Having despatched a messenger to the Black Mount to ascertain whether the sea-eagle had built in any of the forest lochs, we stepped out as far as the little rustic bridge to enjoy the soft pure air. A well-known twitter greeted us, and there was the first swallow darting under the old arch of the primitive bridge, his steel-blue back glancing in the setting sun. "Two of them," shouted my eldest urchin, who, for great diligence in Greek and Latin, had been allowed to accompany us,—"they *do* make a summer."

A car, containing two anglers and their attendants, now drove up. They had been fishing since morning at the falls of the Urchay, and taken a couple of salmon—one nine, the other fifteen and a half pounds weight. The captor of the large fish was in great glee; for the landlord told me it was the "biggest" that had been caught since the season began. The weather had been so dry, and our time so limited, that my salmon rod and tackle had been voted supernumerary. I should now have had no objection to their company, especially as next day, being a festival of the English church, and all the fishers Englishmen, I should have had all the river to myself.

The swallows were true prophets; next day was mild and calm, with a few clouds. After breakfast I walked to the cottage of one of the old fishing-guides to borrow a rod, reel, and flies. "The river is so small, and the wind in so bad an *airt*, that unless it changes you would not get a rise," says old James M'Nicol. Seeing me rather incredulous, he added, "I will come down at one o'clock, and should the wind change we *may* get a fish." The wind had been in the same "airt" for the last week, and well did sly James know it would not change. The truth was, both he and the other old guide had been hired by the Sassenachs, and dared not go out, or even lend a rod or fly, as they of course wished to give the river a day's rest. I was not, therefore, surprised when M'Nicol made his appearance at one, with the excuse that he had to tie some small flies for Mr ——. Opposition only put me upon my mettle. I borrowed an old rod from the waiter, while the landlord, by some secret influence, procured three of the most approved salmon flies, and engaged to send a post-boy who knew the casts.

Being thus pretty well equipped, I started about three for the falls of the Urchay. My boy—no contemptible bait-fisher for trout—begged hard to accompany me, as he had never seen a salmon killed. At the tail of the lowest pool I had the good hap to hook a fish. As I was far from placing implicit reliance on the waiter's tackle, it took some time to tame him, and when I fairly had him under my thumb, where was the gaff? The beach, however, was good, and the post-boy handy, so we soon extracted a very fine eleven-pound salmon. The next pool was a long black whirling linn, but we fished it blank; not a break or boil from top to bottom. We now came to a dangerous but very good cast. It was also deep and black, full of sunk rocks; and, should I hook a fish, it would soon show what the tackle was made of. At the very spot where I expected, up he came, and now was the tug of war:—the fish fighting for the rocks, and I doing my best to keep him clear of them, knowing that if he effected his purpose there was every chance of being cut. My tackle proved excellent; I fairly foiled him, and at last wore him away from the perilous rocks. The post-boy's hands again acted gaff, and brought to bank a noble fifteen pounder.

I was now quite satisfied, and despatched the ready-handed son of the whip for our car, which was put up opposite the place where I killed the first fish. At the very foot of this pool part of the stream flows near the opposite bank. More for the sake of instructing my boy in the mystery of throwing a long line than any sanguine hopes of a rise, I swept my fly twice over this bit of water. At the second throw up came a famous fellow. He turned his head down stream, and dashed along, making my reel ring. There was now a race different ways, my son for the post-boy, and I with the fish. Jehu came puffing like a grampus, ready to gripe his prey. He soon saw that his services would not be required for some time, as the salmon was fresh and strong, and making beautiful play. Patience and caution at length brought him to the bank; and for the first time the post-boy, after having a firm hold, lost it from the strength of the salmon. It was a little while ere I could bring him within reach again, for the fright gave him fresh vigour; but the clutch at the root of the tail was more sure next time, and we landed the finest fish as yet taken in the Urchay since the season opened; sixteen pounds. I both hooked and killed every fish I rose, and with the same fly.

Here let me caution gentlemen neither to be too sanguine nor dispirited by the fishing-guide's prognostications of success or failure from the weather. When you have good sport, they are sure to say the day is all that can be wished. If, on the contrary, you don't stir a fin, they will as certainly console you with some flaw in the wind, water, or sky, how propitious soever they all may have been. Catch them telling the angler (what is more often than not the true cause) that it is his own want of skill.

The greatest bungler may more easily catch a salmon than one of these chaps make such a mistake.

Wild and uncouth were the exclamations and comments from a circle of Highlanders, when the salmon were paraded before the inn; and truly absurd was the edification depicted in my little fellow's features, as he stared from one rugged weather-beaten face to another, severally delivering themselves of their Gaelic sentiments.

The cuckoo is a bird of bad omen if heard for the first time before you break your fast. So said some mountain sage to my little boy, who was unfortunately in that predicament. You are sure to fail in whatever you undertake immediately after; in other words, have "a gowk's errand." Nevertheless the unlucky gowk had brought us a fragrant morning, or more likely the fine morning had tempted the mal-a-propos call from the joyous bird. A note from Peter Robertson was handed to me. The sea eagle had built upon the island of Loch Bah, but was shy and not sitting close yet. "It is all that nasty cuckoo," said my son. "Had you heard *it* in place of seeing the swallows, you would never have hooked the salmon."

There is often more earnest in these "saws" than grown people would be willing to admit. I have known a deerstalker* refuse to go out, on a fine morning for the sport, if he saw a mouse on his kitchen floor at early dawn and *was unable to kill it.* The same man was confident of success should a cat jump out of a bush before him *when on his way to the hill.* He affirms that he never saw either omen fail. This man, from the braes of Atholl, is now conducting a flourishing trade in Edinburgh, a clear-headed capital man of business, and quite as superstitious as when he left the glens many years ago. When the victims are ready prepared, the victimisers will never be wanting. There is now a woman in Morayshire who sells, for a guinea, a bottle of spring water as a charm against all diseases, (if her remedy got a *fair* trial, it might do more good than she thinks or intends,) and after my account of the deer-slaying cobbler, no one will be surprised to hear that she has no lack of customers. Respectable people, often from a great distance, pay (to her) very profitable visits. She is proud of being the lineal descendant of a race of witches, and her grandfather was the acknowledged most potent wizard of the district. From him she inherited the much boasted possession of "the river-horse's bridle" and "the mermaid's stone," which powerful spells she exhibits as proofs of her weird origin and descent.

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* Like most Highland poachers, he had two strings to his bow, and followed the lawful calling of a shoemaker, to conceal as much as possible his depredations on the hills. He told me he had killed thirteen deer before breakfast-time. When after grouse, he never wasted powder and shot upon ptarmigan, as they only fetched two shillings a brace then, whereas grouse brought three and sixpence. The ptarmigan were so

In defiance of the boding cuckoo, I ordered out our vehicle for Inveroran. No votary of nature can follow the windings of this lovely strath of the Urchay without deep interest. The road runs parallel to the river nearly the

plentiful in the forest, that he assured me a fair shot might have bagged ten brace in a few hours.

whole way, and by a little observation, one can scarcely fail to catch a passing glance at many of the creatures that frequent these lonely wilds. An alpine hare, now of a mottled blue and gray, scuttled along the road before us for a considerable distance. She fortunately did not cross it—that *would* have been a clincher to the cuckoo! A roebuck was browsing upon the shoots of the birch and hazel-bushes that fringe the river, not fifty yards off. He only stared at the carriage and "dandered" up the opposite hill. And now the dark outline of Bendora rose before us, whose slate-coloured crags add greatly both to the gloom and grandeur of the forest.

Arrived at Inveroran, there was the characteristic sight of a fine herd of the mountain deer, greedily feeding a little below the crest of the near hill, upon the young sweet grass which had sprung up from a long stretch of burnt heather. The telescope was soon brought to bear upon them, and some fine harts singled out. By the time we had dined, they had fed down to the adjacent knolls.

At break of day the landlord's son and tax-cart were at the door of the inn to convey us part of the way to Loch Bah. Peter Robertson was all ready to jump in, when we passed the handsome new forest-lodge where he has taken up his abode. We halted our cart at the nearest point to the loch, and cut across on foot through the heathery morass. A few redshanks, like well-set-up sentries, were stalking upon the mossy banks at the water's edge, and a stray one occasionally took a short flight from one little tarn to another, piping its desert cry, while numbers of curlews serenaded us from the clouds with their pleasing mournful scream.

When we had picked our steps through this boggy ground, Loch Bah burst upon our view, and the eyrie itself was just discernible upon the birch-tree in the islet. Peter's glass was fixed, and the bird soon distinguished upon the nest. About half a mile from the islet, and close to us, was the shallop, which we were in the act of launching, when a sound, something between a "squeal" and a whistle, rose and died away upon the still solitude. I had never heard anything like it before so singularly plaintive. It had something of the modulated whistle of the buzzard or the kite, but far more sweet, soft, and musical, so fitted to the scenery and the place. It seemed to rise in a low cadence from the shore, and then melt into the clear air. "That's the otter," quoth Peter; "I've heerd them say he gi'es a whustle sometimes." It was soon apparent that he had guessed right, for the "whustle" came next time from the loch, and a gentle break, followed by its circles, showed where the otter had popped up its head, after swimming under water from the shore.

A difficult channel we had to steer through on our way to the islet; and although we changed our land pilot into a water one, and placed him in the bow to boot, our skiff was frequently bumped, and once nearly lifted clear of the water by the numerous sunk rocks.

All sitting birds face the wind, to prevent its ruffling their feathers; so, knowing where the eagle's head would be, we attempted to come in behind her. But when we got half way, she flew off her eyrie, and sat upon a tree, her white tail shining like the silver moon. We were all watching her when the other also flew off the nest and settled near his mate. This did not look well for a shot —the hen evidently was not sitting. When we neared the islet, they both flew out to meet us, uttering their shrill scream. Sometimes they floated at an immense height, and then, cleaving the air in their descent, flew round their eyrie, beating with their wings, which made a hoarse growling noise, like (forgive the comparison) the paddles of a steam-boat at a distance on a calm day.

Peter's great anxiety was to get me hid as quickly as possible; and a speedy job we made of it. I had hardly time to notice the terror of some deer springing into the water to paddle across to the mainland, like Robinson Crusoe's savages, before I was ensconced under a heather and bracken screen. A small aperture was made for my gun-barrel, and from seven o'clock till one I was left alone on the island.

Meantime my companions rowed away to the far end of the loch, and having found a wild-duck's nest full of fresh eggs, and kindled a fire, they soon, with the addition of our basket of provisions, turned out a most comfortable breakfast. The excitement of the moment quite kept down *my* hunger. Every time I heard an uproar among the small black-headed gulls, I was sure the royal pair were approaching; and soon their shadow passed over my ambush. They were generally swimming slowly, at a great height, and seldom came near the nest tree. Once or twice I heard the hollow rumbling, and they dashed past at the distance of sixty yards; but had I wished to take this random chance, it was impossible, as I only commanded the eyrie tree.

The intervals of their visits became longer every time. During one, a pert kestrel lit upon a twig not more than ten yards from the mouth of my gun. Shortly after, its mate perched upon the same branch, and both began to preen their wings without the slightest suspicion that their dreaded foe was closely watching all their motions.

At last the female eagle returned alone. She soon took her departure, and we saw neither of them any more. Whether the sun glancing upon my gun-barrel had scared them, or the skiff upon the loch, we were unable to decide. There was not above half a foot of the barrel visible, but the eagle is of all birds the most wary, and nothing can elude its eye.

When Peter felt sure the game was up, he returned to release me from my watch. I consoled myself with a hearty breakfast and his assurances that we should manage better next year, if we were spared, by allowing the bird to sit hard before disturbing her. Had this been the case now, I should certainly have had a fair shot.

I examined carefully the erne's nest. It was very deep as well as round. There could not have been less than a cart-load of large sticks and twigs. I had some curiosity to know whether both birds built in company, or if the male acted "cad" by bringing the materials while the female was the architect. Swans are very gallant in this particular, supplying their mates with aquatic plants and reeds, while they sit comfortably on the nest and weave its sides. The male eagle, however, would have a far harder task. I once, with much interest, noticed a pair of baldcoots, on Duddingstone Loch, constructing their damp abode. The male dived to the bottom for the leaves of the water-lily, and the female always came to the side of the nest to receive his billful, laying it along in a neat methodical way like a building mason.

A delicious afternoon enabled us equally to enjoy our return drive down the banks of the Urchay. The gorcocks, in the full pride of their scarlet combs, strutted often within pistol-shot of the carriage, and at the foot of the strath, the larches which grew upon the river's bank had their customary complement of black game, perched as usual near the top, and busily engaged in nipping the young shoots. Within a short distance of the inn at Dalmally, a brace of partridges were picking up the corn just sown by the landlord. The noise of our vehicle sprang them. Immediately an impudent sparrow-hawk, far less than the partridge, struck one down. I did not see the deed done, but our driver turned round, and with great animation pointed out the bush where the wounded partridge lay. The little assassin was beating a retreat, but left ample proof of his guilt in a shower of stolen feathers which streamed from him as he flew. He would be certain to return to his prey, and might easily have been trapped. No greater proof of the dire havoc hawks commit among game can be adduced, than the fact that they refuse everything they *don't* hunt down themselves. While, on the contrary, no birds are easier trapped, even at a stale bait, than kites and buzzards.

Once, and only once, I noticed a hen-harrier devouring what she had no hand, or rather foot, in killing. On Lennie Moor I wounded a grouse, and marked the spot where it towered and fell. The scent was bad, and my dogs could not find it. Two days after I was ranging the same ground, and a female hen-harrier rose out of the heather. She was giving the last polishing to the bones of my grouse. It is probable she might have noticed the bird fall, as hawks are very quick in detecting disabled prey. I have seen them single out the wounded bird from a pack, and stick to it closely. Upon one occasion a hawk made a desperate charge at a grouse I had actually knocked down, neglecting several others which rose at the same moment. I gave him an uncomfortable salute with my second barrel.

Next day was the last of our Highland trip, and my boy begged hard to be allowed to dedicate a couple of hours to the pike at Kilchurn.* He had caught his bait before breakfast, and borrowed a pike tackle, the waiter's old rod, and a small rickety reel with *ten yards of very rotten line.* We walked down to the castle of Kilchurn, which is surrounded by a shallow reach of water, a sort of enclosed bay from Loch Awe, full of large pike. A boat is a great advantage here, where sunk banks and feeding grounds abound in every direction, as in many of the shallower

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* The three best places on the loch for pike are Kilchurn, at the head, Port and Sherry Bay, half way down, where the pike generally run large, and, best of all, "the Foord" at the foot.

Highland lochs. We soon hooked a large pike, which ran out our morsel of a line, and then snapped it. He most likely found as little trouble in disgorging the hooks as in breaking the line, which the following fact may show, and I can vouch for the truth of it.

A Thames fisherman hooked a large "jack" when spinning at a mill-tail for trout. Not having a disgorger at hand, he cut the line and threw the pike into a tub of water, to keep it alive and fresh for sale the following day. To his amazement next morning, the creature had managed to cast up the eight-hook tackle, which was lying in the tub.

The two following instances of the pike's voracity are almost incredible, but both I can also certify. In the spring of 1841, two pike of twelve pounds weight were cast upon Loch Vennacher shore, each with a hold of the other's jaws, and quite dead. The second instance happened in Suffolk. A jack of only two pounds was found choked in attempting to swallow another of a pound and a half. The gentleman who saw them taken out, only a short time before, told me the fact.

But even these instances are equalled by the solemn toothless cod. A friend of mine was trolling in Loch Long, and hooked a seithe. An enormous cod seized the seithe, and paid the penalty by being brought into the boat himself. His girth seemed unnaturally large, and, upon opening him, a brown paper packet of sandwiches, enough for luncheon to a pretty large party, was taken out. They could not have been less injured, mustard and all, had the cod's stomach been a sandwich-box.

Our pike has led me to digress. Having no more tackle, we contented ourselves, before joining the carriage which was to convey us to Inverary, with a view of the old castle, now very tottery and dangerous to ascend. Numerous daws were rejoicing in the holes and cavities. The osprey's nest formerly graced a high pinnacle, the owners having an abundant supply of food wherever they chose to seek it. Sea-trout of a large size I have several times seen in the water-eagle's nest; but seldom pike, and never flesh of any kind.

A gamekeeper wantonly shot the last of these beautiful birds that tenanted Kilchurn's turrets, and none have replaced them. I was delighted, however, when trolling Loch Awe last summer, twice to meet with a solitary osprey, probably the widower of Kilchurn Castle. In case he should take a second mate, I have given directions to my gamekeeper to watch in the spring whether they build in any of the moor lochans in the neighbourhood, where, I trust, they will be permitted to rear their family in peace.

Having some arrangements to make at my summer quarters on Loch Awe about the middle of last May, I received a message from my friend Peter Robertson of the Black Mount, the purport of which was, that as the sea-eagle had been sitting hard for some time, he hoped there was little risk of a disappointment like my last. Next evening I arrived at his house. The moon in her crescent, a little shaded by dappled clouds, was casting her pale glow upon the untroubled waters of the forest, tempting us to steal a night-march, in order to surprise the eyrie by break of day.

The fragrant air of the mountains made the spirit rebound, and a slight touch of adventure gave zest to the whole. There was just sufficient light when we neared the islet to distinguish the two eagles winging their way to the mainland. Both lit down near the shore, and eyed our proceedings with an indifferent bearing. It was plain enough the nest had been harried. With discomfited mien, the forester ascended the tree only to confirm what we felt sure of before. "I ken wha has served us this trick," says Peter, setting his telescope for a last look at our quarry on the shore. "He has swam in at nicht, the scoondrel, and ta'en the eggs or young for fear o' his lambs. Mony a time he has swam Loch Rannoch in the nicht-time *to see his lass.*" Upon inquiry, I found that this daring fellow had, night after night, braved the winds and waves of that stormy loch, re-enacting upon the solitudes of Rannoch the far-sung feat of the Hellespont. It naturally struck me, was his barefooted Scotch lassie worthy of such a courtship? Does she, now a Highland dame, feel a secret pride when, sitting at her cottage door on a summer evening, she catches a glimpse of the serene surface of her native loch? Or when the winter storm has raised the white wave, and the snowdrift has sent her stalwart shepherd to the hill, does she breathe the silent prayer of a thankful heart to the Preserver of his days when their love was young? With such thoughts, I scarcely felt disappointment at the termination of my delicious night-walk, and, when I considered the many night-*swims* the shepherd had taken for it, felt glad that he had gained *his prize*, though he had lost me mine.

FRAGMENTS

Many birds, especially those whose young ones run as soon as hatched, and, being thus dispersed, are more likely to be stumbled on, have various arts to arrest the attention of the chance wanderer, and decoy him from the brood. The lapwing is always most clamorous when you are furthest from the objects of her solicitude. So is the curlew; but should you approach them, the mother appears quite careless and unconcerned. Grouse and partridges flutter along the ground as if wounded and unable to fly, the latter uttering a most discordant scream. I have always thought these birds overdo their part, and that the lapwing is far superior to them in the art of misleading. The manœuvres of wild-ducks are similar to those of grouse, and they give notice to the ducklings when they are to dive by a loud quack, which is instantly obeyed. But the most finished actress I have seen was a mire-snipe, which fluttered up exactly as if the tip of its wing was broken. It flew in this disabled manner for about ten yards, when it fell as if exhausted, and lay struggling on its side. I walked forward to seize it, muttering, "Well, if they haven't been poaching even now." Up it rose again, apparently with the greatest difficulty. But this time it was longer in doing the tumble-down part. Suspecting the trick, I followed to see how it would end. After enticing me some distance, it sprang up with its easy natural motion, and triumphantly twisted out of sight.

WHEN I lived at Lennie, my children set an old peahen, long solitary, with some bantam eggs. Five came out, and she proved so careful a stepmother as to rear them all. Some knowing observers declared that her long legs would walk them to death. Not so, for often she carried the whole five on her back; and if any one seemed weak or flagging, she invariably took it up for long together, as a good nurse would spare her sickly child. When they were old enough to roost, she decoyed them to the large boughs of some old tree, where they continued to rest even during the long cold nights of our northern winter. She tended them with great care after they were quite able to shift for themselves, always feeding them with any pieces of bread thrown to her. The little bantams showed equal attachment to their kind protectress; and it was not till spring had far advanced that they left her to join the other poultry.

All creatures which feed upon flying insects, such as the swallow, the bat, &c., must follow and dart at their prey; and this circumstance gives an uncertain irregular cast to their own flight. There is no more curious example of these evolutions than the large greenish brown autumnal dragon-fly. This fierce dragon generally appears in July, and remains till the winter sets in. It has a beat of its own, which it plies most regularly, and its rapid darts are more like a bird of prey than an insect. You see one, perhaps, at a distance; he is close to you in an instant; at two more of his aërial bounds, he clears the adjacent plane-tree, teeming with insects; down the opposite side, round your head again, and all the while seizing gnats in his iron pincers like magic. I once caught in my hat one of these Gorgons, which gave me the opportunity from its being hampered with some load. To my surprise the booty was a middle-sized butterfly, firmly held in its forceps, and most unwillingly released. The head of the poor victim was nearly separated from its body. A most daring interference with the pastime of a quiet angler, staying at my house, was attempted by this insect last summer. He got hold of a trout in Cladich Burn, and, by too brisk a tug, jerked the baited hook out of its mouth, and over his shoulder. The dragon pounced down, seized the worm, and was actually whirled round his head, and nearly into the water, ere it relinquished its grasp. These autumn dragons are very numerous upon and about my moor on Loch-Awe-side, and no doubt do good service by consuming so many gnats and midges. I have sometimes knocked one down with at least half-a-dozen in his ravenous maw. The strength of the wasp is even greater. After holding down and biting to death a fly nearly as big as himself, I have seen him fly away with his burden quite easily. The mason-wasp, also, after constructing its cylinder, will carry a caterpillar as large as itself, and deposit it above its egg, for food to the young grub when it emerges. As great a feat for an insect, as the carrying off an ox for a lion or a tiger.

SOME curious and interesting anecdotes of the nightingale and other soft-billed birds, during the nesting-time, were mentioned to me in conversation, and I begged the kind narrator to commit them to writing. His high standing is sufficient guarantee for their authenticity.

"We never had the nightingales so near the house as this year. It was about the middle of May when, from hearing them sing constantly, and one of them almost at the door, we were led to look about for their nest, and soon found it close upon the ground, in a Virginian raspberry bush, most skilfully fenced about by the canes. It was within a very few yards of the house—not more than ten. At first we were very cautious, and looked at it but seldom, and at a distance; but we soon found that we might be bolder, and, in fact, came to look at the bird as she was sitting, as near and as often as we pleased, without any symptom of annoying her. Quite at the beginning of June the young birds were hatched, and all went on well till the 9th, when L. M. R., hearing a loud and unusual noise from the old birds, went to look how things were going on at the nest. It seemed prodigiously full; and, upon looking close, she perceived that it was filled with an enormous rat, then in the act of devouring what remained of a young one, while both the old birds were flying and chattering over it in the most violent agitation. We soon found, however, that they had contrived to carry off four of the little ones into a place of safety, where they watched over them with most extraordinary care. For some days we could not any of us stir out of the house without the old birds instantly appearing close at our side, and following us wherever we went about the garden in the most fearless manner; and we had a little Skye terrier very like a rat at the time who had a terrible life of it, and was scolded and almost pecked wherever he went. All this went on for nearly a month without any apparent diminution of anxiety on the part of the birds, till at last the young birds grew bold, and used to come daily for crumbs at the kitchen door. One of them, indeed, in the evening came into the house, and was shut up all night, but, when the windows were opened in the morning, flew against them and killed itself. This was almost the last we saw of them that year.

"Last summer, (1840,) a redstart built its nest in a magnolia by the side of the garden wall at Sir Henry

Bunbury's, Barton, Suffolk. The bird laid four eggs, and then, without any known cause, forsook the nest. Very soon afterwards a flycatcher came, and, having spread a little covering over the redstart's eggs, laid one of her own. Upon this one egg she began immediately to sit; and while she was sitting, a Jenny-wren came and also laid one egg in the same nest. She too thereupon began to sit, and both birds sat together upon the same nest for many days, and were seen and looked at together by many persons daily. Both also hatched their young; but as the flycatcher came first, it was fledged first and flew away. Almost immediately afterwards there came at night a violent thunder-storm, which, as the nest of course had not the wren's usual covering, filled it with rain, and the poor little one was drowned. In this state I saw it next morning, August 17, lying dead and soaked upon the redstart's eggs; and the whole of this story, just as I have related it, I heard two several times from Sir Henry and Lady Bunbury."

I HAVE been told by old people who "wonned" on the banks of Loch Lomond, when adders were plentiful, that they frequently noticed these reptiles in the warm summer nights creep from the tangled brushwood, take the water, and swim in the direction of the islands. They were easily seen on their voyage, as they always kept their heads above water. There is less opportunity now of observing these "fish without fins," since the banks have been cleared and cultivated; but to this day Inch Tavannach and Inch Connachan are much infested by them, and indeed all the islands which grow copse and heather. I had a narrow escape near the top of Inch Tavannach rock, when after blackcocks one burning day in September. I heard the creature's malignant hiss close to me, and struck it on the head with the butt of my gun. It appeared stupified; and I was in the act of tying a string round its neck, when I espied another coiled up within a yard of my hand, but quite still. I stepped back for a stick, and gave him a smart rap, which appeared to have put him also beyond further mischief, tied the other end of the string round his neck, and lifted both into my game-bag. I had no success with the old cocks, so soon rowed home. My brother was standing on the quay, and bantered me about coming back with an empty bag. I denied the charge, and, in proving my point, out jumped the two adders quite alive among our fingers. We were close together at the bag-opening, but when my scaly game made its appearance, there was a clear space of ten yards at two bounds. The adders were between two and three feet long.

We chanced on another very large fellow, one hot July day, basking on Inch Moan, just where the shore and heather join. I cut him in two with a blow of my stick, and he had a frog in his stomach, which he must have sucked down head foremost like a boa-constrictor. I have little doubt they destroy quantities of young game in the same way, as they are very numerous on our moors, where I have sometimes shot them to my dog's point. Many keepers declare that they destroy the eggs of game; but I rather think an adder would be puzzled either to break them or bolt them whole. Hedgehogs both suck the eggs, and even devour the very young birds. It is therefore probable that their depredations are often laid to the charge of the adder. My brother's gamekeeper had a pheasant's nest full of eggs consumed by one hedgehog. Expecting to find the bird sitting, he was surprised to count only six out of fourteen eggs. Next day there were only two. He therefore set a trap and caught the robber, a large hedgehog. In the Highlands, however, hedgehogs are rather scarce. Not so in the Lowlands. I seldom went out partridge-shooting, either in Selkirkshire or East Lothian, without my dogs coming to a dead point at one of those bristly balls; and in the former county I took six out of the same hibernaculum of turnip leaves. Such numbers must do serious injury to the preserves.

THE Norway rat is another formidable enemy to game, but does not so much frequent the fields till the grain is ripe. The little patches of corn which skirt Kilmun Moor are chosen resorts of these destructive creatures. The indefatigable terrier may then be seen digging at a burrow for half a day; while stealthy puss, in the twilight, more sure of carrying her point by guile, sits patiently watching another colony of Norsemen, until one of them creeps from the hole. But the rat is still more afraid of the stoat; there is no escape from him, for he can follow them to the inmost recesses of their earth. Early one morning, when looking after blackcocks on the stubble, I detected a stoat entering a rat's hole. As he had not seen me, I stood ready to shoot him, expecting his reappearance. I noticed something move on the ground, a little way off, which proved to be one of the largest male rats I had ever seen, giving its last kick, and weltering in a pool of blood. It had been seized by the crown of the head, and no other wound was perceptible. Wishing to ascertain whether hunger or enmity was the cause of this attack, I returned after breakfast, and found the rat dragged to some distance, and its neck and shoulders devoured.

At another time, in East Lothian, I witnessed a most curious chase after a rabbit by a stoat. Close to the House of Hopes, where I was spending the summer, there are two knolls, one a low sandy one, covered with furze and broom, and all catacombed by rabbit-burrows. Standing upon the higher knoll, I perceived on the one beneath a rabbit dotting along, with a young one, as I thought, following. It was soon plain that the little creature in the rear was a stoat. From my high position, I easily commanded a full view of the hunt. Twice did the tiny pursuer track its prey the whole round of the knoll, a distance of some hundred yards, the rabbit refusing to enter any of the numerous burrows, although it was sometimes so nearly seized as to be obliged to vault into the air to escape. At last it got a little way ahead, and took refuge in some thick brushwood. Expecting that its fate was now sealed, I ran down, and in so doing alarmed the stoat, which made off into a drain. To give the rabbit a chance for its life, I started it also, and it cantered away in an opposite direction. On telling the story to a farmer there, he said that these hunts were not unusual on that bank, but they were far more comical when the stoat was in his white winter dress. The rabbits were almost always run down, and he had trained his sheep-dogs to attack the stoat; at which they were soon so expert as very rarely to miss being the rabbit's avenger.

The weasel, only half the size of the stoat, is more than a match for either a full-grown rabbit or rat. I was amused by an account of one of these combats, related to me by a friend who had just witnessed it, while riding along the public road, near Wargrave, in Berkshire. A weasel had attacked a large Norway rat, which seemed to think discretion the better part of valour. As he was retreating, he always wheeled about, raising himself on his hind legs when attacked in rear. As soon as the weasel heard the sound of the horses' feet, he hid behind a wall, but the poor rat was so completely done up as to suffer himself to be seized by the tail. The English peasantry assert that there are two kinds of weasel, one very small, called "a cane," or "the mouse-killer." This idea, I have no doubt, is erroneous, and the "mouse-killers" are only the young ones of the year; numbers of these half-grown weasels appearing in summer and autumn.

THERE are many conjectures as to the cause of pure white or pied pheasants suddenly appearing in a preserve, which had only been stocked with the common coloured birds. The most reasonable solution seems to be that white blood, although remote, *might* appear after several generations. I have been led to think so, from seeing a whole brood of pheasants turn out milk-white, when the parents were both of the ordinary kind. More often, however, there are only one or two white birds of the same hatch. At Rossdhu, one white hen was observed the second season after pheasants were turned out. It was unfortunately caught in a vermin-trap in the autumn. Several years elapsed before any more were seen, when one cock and two hens appeared among the other pheasants collected on the stubbles at the beginning of winter. These were most probably hatched in the same nide. Since then several more have been noticed at different periods. Pied pheasants have never been seen there, although in many places they are less uncommon than the white. I killed one, very prettily marked, in Roxburghshire, which I put up several times before getting a shot at it. The tail and wing-pinions were pure white; head, neck, and back spotted with white feathers, and legs the colour of a white fowl's. The spurs were exceedingly long and sharp, which, together with its size and brilliancy of plumage, showed it must have been very old.

As there are many preserves where neither pied nor white pheasants have ever been heard of, I am strongly of opinion that a sprinkling of white pheasants have originally been imported, which may have partially extended their ramifications. Most sportsmen will have observed something of the same kind when rabbit-shooting; a black fellow suddenly starting up amidst multitudes of the common grey. I recollect once seeing, in the middle of a populous rabbit-warren, four very young black ones, the only sable inhabitants of the colony. I have often watched them from a tree, and noted that they always kept close together, and frequented the same hole. No doubt they were of the same litter.

Quite distinct from the above is the Albino, several examples of which variety I inserted in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of January 15, 1849. I select the two following, as being particularly curious. " A cream-coloured hart is now roaming Lord Breadalbane's celebrated forest, the Black Mount. But perhaps the most interesting of these 'lusus' is a beautiful roe of the purest white, which haunts the tangled copses of Craig-an-James, on the banks of Loch Lomond. This fairy-like creature, so harmonising with the romantic district it frequents, was first observed last spring, when a fawn, by the keepers of Sir James Colquhoun of that Ilk, on whose property it is. Its eyes are red, and, what is very remarkable, it does not vary its colour according to the season. This is the more unaccountable, as the roe always changes the chestnut red of summer for the dark mouse-colour of winter. This winter dress prevents the animal from being readily seen, when the coverts are thin and bare and the trees stript of their leaves, and is one among the thousand provisions for these creatures, so defenceless and so often assailed, by the Hand that formed them all. The instinct, however, of the species leads our white-robed dryad to suppose herself, when squatted, as safe as her sober-coated companions, though her colour at once betrays her. The Alpine hare, on the contrary, not being an *exception*, but a *distinct* race, seems fully aware of its conspicuous winter appearance, and, when the snow is off the ground, always seeks to hide among the light grey rocks or thick patches of heather."

I am sorry to say that this curiosity was unable to bear the only few days of severe weather the following winter. It was found in a dying state among the snow, which it almost rivalled in purity. My brother has had it stuffed.

The summer before last, another red-deer calf appeared in the Black Mount, as white as a sheep. This yearling can be made out on the hill at a mile's distance, among heather or rocks.

There is a pure white rook in the Edinburgh Zoological Gardens, taken out of a nest at Dalkeith. The brood contained several black ones besides, one of which was brought away for company and by way of contrast to the albino. The ivory and ebony were both in fine polish the last time I saw them.

In all creatures that put on their white winter dress, there is a dark spot, left as hostage for their again appearing in summer hue; but albinos have always the same unvarying sickly white.

THE hooded or Royston crow of England must either be different in its habits from that of Scotland, or naturalists of the south are much mistaken in their observations on this bird. Bewick and others make a marked difference between the Royston and carrion crows, saying that the "former arrive with the woodcock, and take their departure in spring to breed." Now, in Scotland, there appear to me nearly as many hooded as carrion crows all summer, and *both* are called by the common people "Hoody Craws." Nests are constantly found with one of both kinds; and I have noticed that the male is generally hooded, and the female black. The young also are mixed. Bewick says that, in more northern parts, the Royston crow remains the whole year, subsisting on sea-worms, shell-fish, &c. Now I have remarked that the black crow is nearly as often to be met with on the sea-shore as the Royston, and is equally fond of shell-fish. Those hooded crows on the sea-shore are much lighter in the colour, and more apt to live in pairs than the inland ones, which I don't recollect ever seeing build together. I have, however, often found nests where both male and female were black. The food of *Inland* Royston and black carrion crows is alike; their habits are the same; they are also found always in company when the young leave the nest. A gamekeeper, of some experience in trapping vermin, informs me that two Roystons and two black may be hatched in the same nest; also, that sometimes the male is hooded, and sometimes the female.

One morning last January, my boy, when leaving home for the Edinburgh Academy, noticed what he called a foreign bird with "a fine top" feeding upon the fruit of the sweetbrier rose, in our garden at Portobello. As the train was about to start, he was unable to warn me of this rarity. At feeding time, next day, the crested foreigner again took possession of his bush, and, not content with satisfying his own hunger, drove away all the natives from their morning meal. Whenever I got my eye on him, I saw that he was a male waxwing, (the Bohemian chatterer,) and, of course, in fine plumage at that time of year. His crest and bearing made him look exactly like a miniature jay. He twisted off two or three large hips, swallowed them whole, rested for a while, then repeated the operation, always clearing the bush of company. After watching his tyrannical conduct, I took the liberty of adding him to my list of stuffed specimens. It was rather curious that he should have taken up his quarters in our crescent, surrounded by houses on all sides.

In consequence of a summons from Adams of the Bass Rock, last March, I went down, by a morning train, to North Berwick, where he agreed to meet me for a cruise in the firth after the eider-ducks. Each year a few of these Norwegians remain among the rocky islets of the Forth for the purpose of incubation. On the Bass there was only one nest last season; but they are more apt to hatch on the rocks of "the Lamb" and "Fiddery," and even in the bluff headlands of the coast. Their nests are not easily found, especially as the duck is so close a sitter. As the eiders had not paired, I expected a good view of them swimming in small companies, and perhaps a chance shot at a drake from a large single gun I brought with me. The west wind scarcely dimpled the sea; so, with the exception of one long shot which did not touch, no eiders would allow a nearer approach than some hundred yards. The drakes had a singular appearance on wing—the upper half of their bodies snowy white, and the lower jet black. At the distance they rose, the division of colour looked pretty equal. I was delighted with a good sight of that beautiful creature the long-tailed duck. He was diving in the harbour, and is nicknamed "Col the caunle-wick" by the fishermen, on account of his cry. We passed a very wild flock or two of velvet-ducks, but I saw none of the common scoter. Crowds of dunlins and knots, collectively named "mussel-pickers" by Adams, were tripping upon many of the points. The oyster-catchers ("sea-pyats") also held a meeting on the rocks of "the Lamb." I was anxious to hear of the great northern diver, and one of our crew told me that he had sometimes seen it, and once fired a great many shots at a splendid "loon" without effect. The red-throated diver now and then rose near our boat, which he pointed out as "a gurl." The raven had shifted its quarters from the Bass to Fiddery, and, when nearing the islet, we noticed the pair flying across to the opposite shore. The nest was under a screen of rock immediately overhanging a perpendicular cliff. It was quite snug from the weather. Although we could not see into the nest, there were most likely eggs, as the raven lays so early. All winter, the great cormorant roosts at night upon the Bass. They were now in their superb breeding plumage, and, from the white patch of feathers on each thigh, they have obtained the flash name of "the letter-o'-mark." The boatmen fancied the birds under three years, who had not this mark, a distinct species. We saw numbers flying backwards and forwards, or sitting patient upon a rock, imparting to it their own silent mournful character. Their credentials were quite apparent to the naked eye. The wind was in the wrong direction for landing, or I could easily have procured a "letter-o'-mark" flying to its perch in the evening, as they had not yet abandoned their winter dormitory.

THE common buzzard is a capital mole-catcher; and at the beginning of winter, when the mole-hills appear, he generally takes possession of any convenient fallow-ground. Shifting from tree to tree, he watches the casting up of the earths, ready to leap down upon the mole as soon as his instinct assures him that it is close to the surface. Buzzards always watch prey in this manner, and jump down upon it from the perch. They destroy numbers of reptiles and small vermin, on which account they deserve the good-will of the farmer.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

TRAPPING THE TRUE AND LEGITIMATE WAY TO DESTROY VERMIN

I HAVE put together the following directions for the trapping of vermin, in order that gentlemen may judge of the merits of their keepers in this respect; being well aware how few have anything like a perfect knowledge of this most necessary part of their business. No moors or manors can abound with game unless the vermin are killed off; and if the traps are not set with much skill, and the places for planting them for the different kinds of vermin selected with great judgment, more harm than good is done, as few are caught, and the rest put on their guard, and thus rendered more cunning and difficult to be trapped afterwards.

A gentleman should first ascertain if his keeper can perform the mere manual act of setting a trap. This must be done by cutting a shape for it with a mole-spade in the turf, thinly sprinkling the plate with earth, and then giving a top-covering precisely the same as the ground: when set, it should be neither higher nor lower. After having satisfied himself of the neatness of the setting, the gentleman may spring the trap, and if it closes clear of grass or leaves, he may rest satisfied that his keeper knows the A B C of vermin-killing. If, on the contrary, a quantity of the top-dressing is caught between the jaws of the trap, the keeper is not fit to set for vermin, and must be made thoroughly master of this first requisite before he attempts to do so.

I shall now mention the different kinds of four-footed and then winged vermin, giving minute instructions how each may be most readily trapped. Foxes are the most cunning, and consequently most difficult to be taken. The best time to set for them is from the beginning of January—when the males follow the females—till March. Their haunts may then often be discovered by their wild peculiar bark. Any clear open space near them, with a hollow in the middle, is the place to plant traps. The hollow is necessary, as the fox always likes to be out of sight when he is eating. The bait is a piece of hare, rabbit, or the entrails of any animal, covered over slightly with earth; and half-a-dozen traps are set round with the utmost care. Fewer will not do, as the fox might escape between. The bait is covered over in order to make Reynard suppose that another fox or dog may have buried it there. Some drag it along the ground for a considerable distance on either side, after first rubbing it on the soles of their shoes, and letting fall little pieces of cheese at intervals: this can do no harm, but I think as little good.

The circle of twigs is also a very good way of trapping foxes all the year. It should be made larger than for martens or cats, in order to contain more bait—this should be added to without being removed when it taints, *as the greater the scent the better the chance.* Traps set for foxes should never be made fast, or they are apt to gnaw the leg off: the best plan is to tie two or three together; for if the fox can drag them, however great the difficulty, he will not attempt the desperate remedy of *amputating his leg.* When they have litters, the old ones may be taken; but it requires great judgment to select the spot they would be most likely to walk over in going to and from their young: a first-rate trapper, however, will generally secure one or both. It is the more difficult, as the traps must be set at some distance, or the young ones would be apt to stumble into them. As only single traps are set, they should be tied to a stone just large enough for the fox to drag with some trouble. The keeper should always sprinkle a little water over the top covering of the trap to take off the scent of his fingers.

I do not give publicity to these modes of destroying foxes, with any design to their being followed in the Lowlands, where the gentlemen of the "View halloo!" would give me small thanks. I only write for the preservation of the Highland game and lambs; and am sure that, if my plan was vigorously followed up, we should not be infested with half so many foxes as we are, "fox-hunter" and all! This, I believe, will never be; the fun of a Highland fox-hunt being so popular among the farmers as to overbalance the merits of any other system requiring trouble, dexterity, and patience.*

The otter, although harmless on the moor, is sufficiently mischievous in the loch to deserve honourable mention here. On the banks of the lochs and rivers which he frequents, he has always a fane to which he resorts once a day: this is either a stone or root of a tree; but if neither of these are at hand, he scrapes up the sand or gravel into a small mound. It is easy to know his marks, as his dung is full of fish-bones. Traps should be set all round, a twenty-feet cord tied to each, with a cork or piece of wood attached; the traps never to be fastened, otherwise the otter may pull out his leg, from its being so smooth, thick, and short. The moment he is caught, he waddles with the trap to the water, which sinks and drowns him, the line and float showing where. It is also an excellent plan to look for the place where he lands, and plant a trap just under water. As soon as he strikes for ground, he is caught by the fore-feet. This trap needs no covering but the water, and is never suspected.

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* I lately saw in the newspapers a plan for extirpating foxes in the Highlands. Each hill-farmer was to keep a couple of fox-hounds, a good greyhound, besides terriers. When occasion offered, they were to join packs, and collect the best shots (*alias*, the greatest poachers) in the neighbourhood. I can only say, without in the least impugning the motives or honesty of intention of the projector, that if the Highland proprietors suffer a gang of this kind to take the hill at pleasure, they will soon hardly have a head of game on their estates. As to allowing farmers to keep greyhounds, terriers, &c., no gentleman who sets any value on his grouse or hares would ever think of it.

Cats, martens, and fowmartes are easily trapped. Plant a circle of twigs about three yards round, the twigs a foot and a half long and close to each other, placing the same bait as for a fox in the centre, but without any covering; leave two openings at opposite sides just large enough for the trap. You may also set with baits hanging on the stem of a tree—a few twigs placed on either side to prevent the vermin sneaking in there, and so carrying off the bait. Box-traps are very good for stoats or weasels; but as they are generally set in the low grounds, where polecats also abound, I prefer an iron rat-trap with a strong spring, having found that the fowmarte constantly pushed up the lid of the other, and so escaped. The rat-trap will hold a polecat, and do little or no injury to cattle or dogs. The bait should be hung upon a twig immediately above, and almost out of reach of the weasels.

Stoats, and especially weasels, are often seen in great abundance in summer. They may then be very easily shot, as you have only to imitate the squeak of a mouse to bring them close to you. I once, when without a gun, decoyed one so far away from its retreat that I killed it with my stick. Should the keeper see a weasel, all he has to do is, with as much speed as possible, to cut a small piece from any of his baits, drag it along the ground where he last saw the weasel, and hang it on a twig with his rat-trap under, as before described: if he does not let too long time elapse, it is sure to be taken. The weasel, like the merlin, is the maximum of strength, courage, and activity, in the minimum of size. The depredations of this little creature would not be so formidable, if he contented himself with satisfying hunger. But, on the contrary, whenever he has the opportunity, he murders by wholesale like the marten, rejecting everything but the most dainty morsels. One of these little rascals, in pursuit of a rabbit or young hare, is the very miniature of a wolf running down a deer; a panic comes over the victim, which prevents it from making a determined effort to escape. Instead of distancing its persecutor by taking a long stretch, the poor terror-stricken rabbit keeps slowly dotting along, only a short way ahead, and squats down the first opportunity. The weasel follows on the track, and very soon the rabbit, not daring to take refuge in its hole, resigns itself to its fate.

I kept a weasel for some time in a wire cage, which soon became tame enough to pull little pieces of meat from the hand through the bars. Having a mind to try its pluck, I procured from a rat-catcher an enormous male rat, at least twice the size of the weasel, and in presence of several friends turned it into the cage. The rat reared itself on its hind legs and fought with the utmost desperation, but in less than a quarter of a minute it lay gasping on its side. There is a curious account of a similar fight between a large buck-ferret and a rat, in Jesse's *Gleanings of Natural History;* but I cannot help thinking, either that the rat must have been the champion of the *genus mus*, or the ferret the most faint-hearted of his species. Once let a ferret, properly entered at rats, get within a gripe of its foe, and it will seize *by scent* with the rapidity of lightning, and never quit its hold while life remains. The pheasantry-keeper, whom I before mentioned as having taught grouse, black-game, pheasants, &c., to live together in harmony, tried a similar experiment with a ferret, a polecat, a stoat, and a weasel. They were confined in a large box grated over with iron bars; and the result proved that a ferret stands upon little ceremony with a much more fierce and active enemy than a rat. The first victim was the stoat, whose place was supplied by another, which soon shared the fate of its predecessor. The ferret next attacked and killed the weasel; and, to crown all, the polecat, a large male, nearly double the size of the ferret, a small female, was found dead one morning—the cage exhibiting the marks of a desperate struggle: the fowmarte certainly fought at disadvantage, one of its fore-legs having been injured by a trap. These creatures had lived together for upwards of a month, after which time the ferret commenced its attacks at intervals of a few days or a week. I went out daily to see them fed, when the dinner-party exhibited very little kindliness or good breeding.

No traps should be set for running vermin during warm weather, as the bait so soon taints; nor in hard frost, as the traps are then not apt to spring, or hold the vermin so slightly that they escape.

WINGED VERMIN

The hawk tribe, seldom or never taking a bait, are the most difficult to be trapped of all winged vermin. The only plan with any chance of success (except at the breeding time) is to place a trap on the top of a wall, or bare stump of a tree, throwing a dead cat or other carrion at the foot; the hawks will often alight, to look down at it, and thus be caught. A hawk, however, will always return to any bird he has killed, even should scarcely anything be left but the bones. In such a case, immediately procure a trap, hang the bird directly above, and *close* to it, or the hawk may reach over and take it down without touching the trap.

But when they hatch is the time thoroughly to thin them. The nests should be most carefully searched out, and not disturbed until the young are more than half fledged. Many shoot the old hen flying off her eggs; but this is not the way to extirpate the race, as the males of course escape. When the young are pretty strong, and able to call loudly from hunger, take them out of the nest, and make two circles *out of sight of each other.* These circles must not be artificial or formed of twigs stuck in the ground, but any bushes of furze, heather, or rushes, must be taken advantage of for the purpose. Half of the young ones must be tied in the one, and half in the other. They must have very short tethers, or they will waddle into the trap. If this is well executed, you are sure of both old ones next day.

Buzzards * and kites are easily trapped in autumn or winter, as they readily take a bait. It is not worth while to take much trouble about them, as they do little mischief to game, unless a young bird that cannot fly, or small leveret, happen to stumble in their way. I am loath to bring an accusation against my great favourite, the ivy-owl, but truth compels me to say that he is nearly as injurious to game as the buzzard—quite as much so as the kite. The other owls—viz, the white and the long and short eared--may be considered harmless.

Carrion-crows and ravens, or "corbies," take them for all in all, are perhaps as mischievous as hawks. The best season for trapping them is in March and April; the circle of twigs is to be set in conspicuous places; the same bait as for foxes, martens, &c. will do, but the best is a dead lamb, from being so readily seen; and at that season it may be very easily procured. The numbers taken in this way are astonishing. When they become cunning, take down the twigs and plant half-a-dozen traps round the lamb. If there is a puddle of water near, the bait may be placed in the middle of it, with one or two entrances, upon which traps may be set; the ravens, &c. are sure to light on these entrances before settling on the lamb, and the trouble of setting so many traps as would otherwise be required is thus avoided.

Magpies, jays, &c. all take a bait; but the grand recipe thoroughly to destroy them is to find the nests and set the young in circles.

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* A curious story of the honey-buzzard was related to me by a gentleman whose name stands high as a scholar, and who takes great interest in Natural History. A friend of his was passing a gravel-pit, when he perceived what he thought was a bird without a head; he walked silently forward and seized it, and discovered that his prize was a honey-buzzard, which had thrust its head into a wasp's nest, and was busily engaged in devouring the larvæ. The bird was kept tame for some time afterwards.

There are many other ways of killing all these vermin which I have not thought it worth while to mention, as they cannot stand a comparison with those I have named. Traps must always be set close to paths or any other open places near the haunts of the different vermin, with which it should be the keeper's great endeavour to make himself thoroughly acquainted. If placed according to these rules, there is not much danger of either cattle or game getting into any, except those set *without circles* for carrion-crows or foxes, which of course require caution. We constantly see keepers lounging about with their guns in pursuit of vermin; this ought not to be. Guns only tempt them to idleness, and are an excellent excuse for doing nothing. In my opinion, no vermin should be shot by a gamekeeper. But if his master prefer securing the old hens as they fly off the nest during incubation, instead of waiting for the young to come out, no other plan can be adopted. My reasons to the contrary have been given.

I have no doubt that the truly valuable keeper, who takes an interest in the duties of his situation, will approve of all I have said, and endeavour to profit by it: the careless, ignorant, and lazy will as certainly cavil and condemn.

TRAPS

Great care should be taken in the selection of traps: none but an approved maker ought to be employed: *that the springs are well tempered and strong is of the utmost consequence.* The jaws must *overlap,* which is a great preventive to the legs, especially of the winged vermin, being shred off. To avoid this, some traps are made with weaker springs and long teeth: these are not to be recommended, for, although the teeth may counterbalance the weakness of the spring, yet the vermin are apt to feel them when walking up to the bait, and slink back without stepping on the plate. It is also much more difficult to set them neatly. Traps whose springs have been weakened by constant use may be reserved for flying vermin.

VERMIN TERRIER

I had almost forgotten to say that every game keeper, in all his trapping and other excursions, should be accompanied by an excellent vermin terrier. The use of this dog is to challenge vermin in earths, clefts of rocks, &c., thus making the keeper aware where to plant a trap—to find out fowmartes in old walls or heaps of stones, where they generally conceal themselves, and to run those banes of the preserve, the *semi*-wild cats, into trees, where, with the assistance of his master, they may easily be killed. A dog will soon become so expert at this last accomplishment that few cats will be able to escape him. These cats do much more mischief than real wild ones, as they are impudent enough to carry their depredations into the midst of the preserve, and close to the most frequented places. The fowmarte, although an enemy to all game, is generally more calumniated than he deserves: he is not nearly so injurious as the marten or cat. I have frequently found his retreat when no other signs of plunder were to be seen except a few frogs half-eaten. When discovered, the polecat has no activity; and if the wall or heap of stones where he has sheltered himself can be pulled down or removed, he cannot escape.

Only *one and the same terrier* should be the keeper's constant companion, as the dog will soon be "up to" the traps, and from continual practice become first-rate at this work. He must have a very good nose, and be perfectly callous to game of all descriptions, but especially rabbits and hares.

POISONING VERMIN

Clearing off the vermin by poison has been much in vogue of late years. But, to say nothing of murdering all the dogs in the neighbourhood, it seems a pity to treat the *now* rare and interesting rovers of the desert like rats. This Turko-Spanish plan of quietly putting them out of the way may find favour with the man whose only pleasure in Highland sport consists in butchering game. For my own part, I would rather trap one fine specimen of the hill-fox, the wild-cat, or the marten, than shoot one hundred brace of grouse. As to the mean pilfering Lowland kinds, such as carrion-crows and magpies, there is no danger of scarcity in that quarter, and no risk in poisoning them, provided it is done by means of eggs. The keeper has only to gum with a piece of white paper the chip in the shell where the strychnine is inserted, and put two or three of these poisoned eggs, a little shaded by the long grass, under the trees where the magpies, &c. harbour. They will be almost certain to see and devour them.

THE END

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